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H. DE BALZAC

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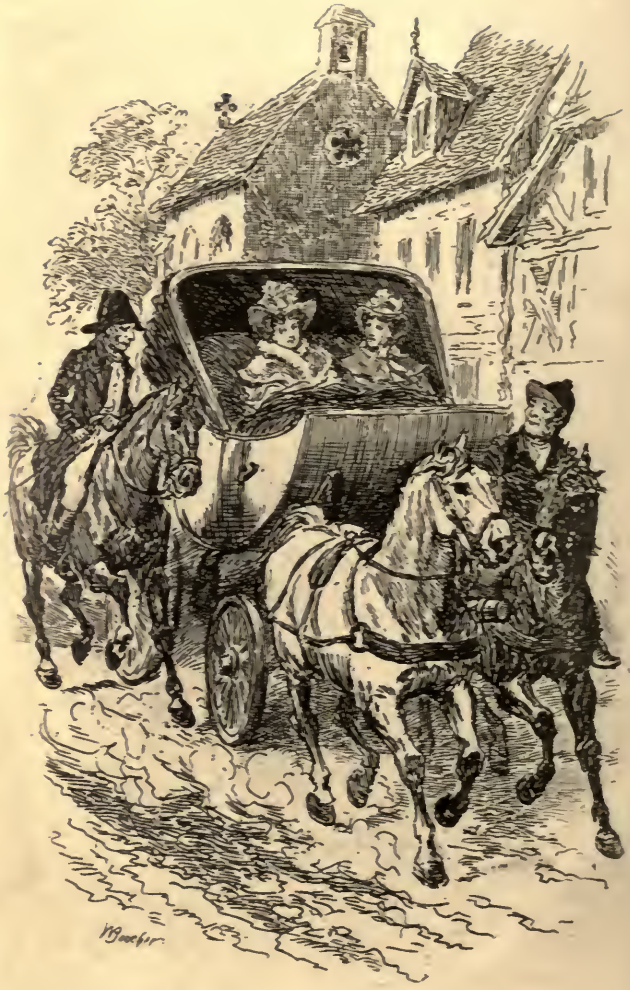

SHE TOOK HER MAID WITH HER, AND THE OLD SOLDIER GALLOPED BESIDE THE CARRIAGE.

H. DE BALZAC

A WOMAN OF THIRTY

(LA FEMME DE TRENTE ANS)

AND A START IN LIFE

TRANSLATED BY

ELLEN MARRIAGE

WITH A PREFACE BY

GEORGE SAINTSBURY

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PREFACE.

"La Femme de Trente Ans," which opens the volume, is tainted with a kind of sentimentalism which, in Balzac's hands and to English taste, very rarely escapes a smatch of the rancid. As M. de Lovenjoul's patient investigations have shown, and as the curiously wide date 1828–1844 would itself indicate to any one who has carefully studied Balzac's ways of proceeding, it is not really a single story at all, but consists of half a dozen chapters or episodes originally published at different times and in different places, and stuck together with so much less than even the author's usual attention to strict construction, that the general title is totally inapplicable to the greater part of the book, and that the chronology of that part to which it does apply fits in very badly with the rest. This, however, is the least of the faults of the piece. It is more—though still not most—serious that Balzac never seems to have made up anything like a clear or consistent idea of Julie d'Aiglemont in his mind. First she is a selfish and thoughtless child; then an angelic and persecuted but faithful wife; then a somewhat facile victim to a very commonplace seducer, after resisting an exceptional one. So, again, she is first a devoted mother, then an almost unnatural parent, and then again devoted, being punished *par où elle a pêché* [however she may sin] once more. Even this, however, might have been atoned for by truth, or grace, or power of handling. I cannot find much of any of these things here. Not to mention the unsavoriness of part of Julie's trials, they are not such as, in me at least, excite any sympathy; and Balzac has drenched her with the sickly sentiment above noticed to an almost nauseous extent. Although he would have us take the Marquis as a brutal husband, he does not in effect represent

him as such, but merely as a not very refined and rather clumsy "good fellow," who for his sins is cursed with a *mijaurée* [affected] of a wife. The Julie-Arthur love-passages are in the very worst style of "sensibility;" and though I fully acknowledge the heroism of my countryman Lord Arthur in allowing his fingers to be crushed and making no sign—although I question very much whether I could have done the same—I fear this romantic act does not suffice to give verisimilitude to a figure which is for the most part mere pasteboard, with sawdust inside and tinsel out. Many of the incidents, such as the pushing of the child into the water, and, still more, the scene on shipboard where the princely Corsair takes millions out of a piano and gives them away, have the crude and childish absurdity of the "Œuvres de Jeunesse," which they very much resemble, and with which, from the earliest date given, they may very probably have been contemporary. Those who are fortunate enough to find Julie, in her early afternoon of *femme incomprise* [non-compromised woman], attractive, may put up with these defects. I own that I am not quite able to find the compensation sufficient. The worse side of the French "sensibility" school from Rousseau to Madame de Stael appears here; and Balzac, genius as he was, had quite weak points enough of his own without borrowing other men's and women's.

It takes M. de Lovenjoul nearly three of his large pages of small type to give an exact bibliography of the extraordinary mosaic which bears the title of "La Femme de Trente Ans." It must be sufficient here to say that most of its parts appeared separately in different periodicals (notably the "Revue de Paris") during the very early thirties; that when in 1832 most of them appeared together in the "Scènes de la Vie Privée" they were independent stories; and that when the author did put them together, he at first adopted the title "Même Histoire."

The second story in the volume, a very slight touch of un-

necessary cruelty excepted, is one of the truest and most amusing of all Balzac's *repertoire;* and it is conducted according to the orthodox methods of poetical justice. It is impossible not to recognize the justice of the portraiture of the luckless Oscar Husson, and the exact verisimilitude of the way in which he succumbs to the temptations and practical jokes (the first title of the story was "Le Danger des Mystifications") of his companions. I am not a good authority on matters dramatic; but it seems to me that the story would lend itself to the stage in the right hands better than almost anything that Balzac has done. Half an *enfant terrible* and half a Sir Martin Marall, the luckless Oscar "puts his foot into it," and emerges in deplorable condition, with a sustained success which would do credit to all but the very best writers of farcical comedy, and would not disgrace the very best.

In such pieces the characters other than the hero have but to play contributory parts, and here they do not fail to do so. M. de Sérizy, whom it pleased Balzac to keep in a dozen books as his stock example of the unfortunate husband, plays his part with at least as much dignity as is easily possible to such a personage. Madame Clapart is not too absurd as the fond mother of the cub; and Moreau, her ancient lover, is equally commendable in the not very easy part of a "protector." The easy-going ladies who figure in Oscar's second collapse display well enough that rather facile generosity and good-nature which Balzac is fond of attributing to them. As for the "Mystificators," Balzac, as usual, is decidedly more lenient to the artist folk than he is elsewhere to men of letters. Mistigris, or Léon de Lora, is always a pleasant person, and Joseph Bridau always a respectable one. Georges Marest is no doubt a bad fellow, but he gets punished.

Nor ought we to omit notice of the careful study of the apprenticeship of a lawyer's clerk, wherein, as elsewhere no doubt, Balzac profited by his own novitiate. Altogether the story is a pleasant one, and we acquiesce in the tempering

of the wind to Oscar when that ordinary person is consoled for his sufferings with the paradise of the French bourgeois —a respectable place, a wife with no dangerous brilliancy, and a good *dot*.

G. S.

A WOMAN OF THIRTY.

To Louis Boulanger, Painter.

I.

EARLY MISTAKES.

It was a Sunday morning in the beginning of April, 1813, a morning which gave promise of one of those bright days when Parisians, for the first time in the year, behold dry pavements underfoot and a cloudless sky overhead. It was not yet noon when a luxurious cabriolet, drawn by two spirited horses, turned out of the Rue de Castiglione into the Rue de Rivoli, and drew up behind a row of carriages standing before the newly opened barrier half-way down the Feuillant Terrace. The owner of the carriage looked anxious and out of health; the thin hair on his sallow temples, turning gray already, gave a look of premature age to his face. He flung the reins to a servant who followed on horseback, and alighted to take in his arms a young girl whose dainty beauty had already attracted the eyes of loungers on the terrace. The little lady, standing upon the carriage step, graciously submitted to be taken by the waist, putting an arm around the neck of her guide, who set her down upon the pavement without so much as ruffling the trimming of her green rep dress. No lover would have been more careful. The stranger could only be the father of the young girl, who took his arm familiarly without a word of thanks, and hurried him into the garden of the Tuileries.

The old father noted the wondering stare which some of the young men gave the couple, and the sad expression left his face for a moment. Although he had long since reached the

time of life when a man is fain to be content with such illusory delights as vanity bestows, he began to smile.

"They think you are my wife," he said in the young lady's ear, and he held himself erect and walked with slow steps, which filled his daughter with despair.

He seemed to take up the coquette's part for her; perhaps of the two, he was the more gratified by the curious glances directed at those little feet, shod with plum-colored prunella; at the dainty figure outlined by a low-cut bodice, filled in with an embroidered chemisette, which only partially concealed the girlish throat. Her dress was lifted by her movements as she walked, giving glimpses higher than the shoes of delicately moulded outlines beneath open-work silk stockings. More than one of the idlers turned and passed the pair again, to admire or to catch a second glimpse of the young face, about which the brown tresses played; there was a glow in its white and red, partly reflected from the rose-colored satin lining of her fashionable bonnet, partly due to the eagerness and impatience which sparkled in every feature. A mischievous sweetness lighted up the beautiful, almond-shaped dark eyes, bathed in liquid brightness, shaded by the long lashes and curving arch of eyebrow. Life and youth displayed their treasures in the petulant face and in the gracious outlines of the bust, unspoiled even by the fashion of the day, which brought the girdle under the breast.

The young lady herself appeared to be insensible to admiration. Her eyes were fixed in a sort of anxiety on the palace of the Tuileries, the goal, doubtless, of her petulant promenade. It wanted but fifteen minutes of noon, yet even at that early hour several women in gala dress were coming away from the Tuileries, not without backward glances at the gates and pouting looks of discontent, as if they regretted the lateness of the arrival which had cheated them of a longed-for spectacle. Chance carried a few words let fall by one of these disappointed fair ones to the ears of the charming stranger,

and put her in a more than common uneasiness. The elderly man watched the signs of impatience and apprehension which flitted across his companion's pretty face with interest, rather than amusement, in his eyes, observing her with a close and careful attention, which perhaps could only be prompted by some after-thought in the depths of a father's mind.

It was the thirteenth Sunday of the year 1813. In two days' time Napoleon was to set out upon the disastrous campaign in which he was to lose first Bessières, and then Duroc; he was to win the memorable battles of Lutzen and Bautzen, to see himself treacherously deserted by Austria, Saxony, Bavaria, and Bernadotte, and to dispute the dreadful field of Leipsic.* The magnificent review commanded for that day by the Emperor was to be the last of so many which had long drawn forth the admiration of Paris and of foreign visitors. For the last time the Old Guard would execute their scientific military manœuvres with the pomp and precision which sometimes amazed the Giant himself. Napoleon was nearly ready for his duel with Europe. It was a sad sentiment which brought a brilliant and curious throng to the Tuileries. Each mind seemed to foresee the future; perhaps, too, in every mind another thought was dimly present, how that in that future, when the heroic age of France should have taken the half-fabulous color with which it is tinged for us to-day, men's imaginations would more than once seek to retrace the picture of the pageant which they were assembled to behold.

"Do let us go more quickly, father; I can hear the drums," the young girl said, and in a half-teasing, half-coaxing manner she urged her companion forward.

"The troops are marching into the Tuileries," said he.

"Or marching out of it—everybody is coming away," she answered in childish vexation, which drew a smile from her father.

* Völkerschlacht: Napoleon's first defeat.

"The review only begins at half-past twelve," he said; he had fallen half behind his impetuous daughter.

It might have been supposed that she meant to hasten their progress by the movement of her right arm, for it swung like an oar-blade through the water. In her impatience she had crushed her handkerchief into a ball in her tiny, well-gloved fingers. Now and then the old man smiled, but the smiles were succeeded by an anxious look which crossed his withered face and saddened it. In his love for the fair young girl by his side, he was as fain to exalt the present moment as to dread the future. "She is happy to-day; will her happiness last?" he seemed to ask himself, for the old are somewhat prone to foresee their own sorrows in the future of the young.

Father and daughter reached the peristyle under the tower where the tricolor flag was still waving; but, as they passed under the arch by which people came and went between the gardens of the Tuileries and the Place du Carrousel, the sentries on guard called out sternly—

"No admittance this way!"

By standing on tiptoe the young girl contrived to catch a glimpse of a crowd of well-dressed women, thronging either side of the old marble arcade along which the Emperor was to pass.

"We were too late in starting, father; you can see that quite well." A little piteous pout revealed the immense importance which she attached to the sight of this particular review.

"Very well, Julie—let us go away. You dislike a crush."

"Do let us stay, father. Even here I may catch a glimpse of the Emperor; he might die during this campaign, and then I should never have seen him."

Her father shuddered at the selfish speech. There were tears in the girl's voice; he looked at her, and thought that he saw tears beneath her lowered eyelids; tears caused not so much by the disappointment as by one of the troubles of early

youth, a secret easily guessed by an old father. Suddenly Julie's face flushed, and she uttered an exclamation. Neither her father nor the sentinels understood the meaning of the cry; but an officer within the barrier, who sprang across the court toward the staircase, heard it, and turned abruptly at the sound. He went to the arcade by the gardens of the Tuileries, and recognized the young lady who had been hidden for a moment by the tall bearskin caps of the grenadiers. He set aside in favor of the pair the order which he himself had given. Then, taking no heed of the murmurings of the fashionable crowd seated under the arcade, he gently drew the enraptured child toward him.

"I am no longer surprised at her vexation and enthusiasm, if *you* are in waiting," the old man said with a half-mocking, half-serious glance at the officer.

"If you want a good position, Monsieur le Duc," the young man answered, "we must not spend any time in talking. The Emperor does not like to be kept waiting, and the grand marshal has sent me to announce our readiness."

As he spoke, he had taken Julie's arm with a certain air of old acquaintance, and drew her rapidly in the direction of the Place du Carrousel. Julie was astonished at the sight. An immense crowd was penned up in a narrow space, shut in between the gray walls of the palace and the limits marked out by chains round the great sanded squares in the midst of the courtyard of the Tuileries. The cordon of sentries posted to keep a clear passage for the Emperor and his staff had great difficulty in keeping back the eager humming swarm of human beings.

"Is it going to be a very fine sight?" Julie asked (she was radiant now).

"Pray take care!" cried her guide, and, seizing Julie by the waist, he lifted her up with as much vigor as rapidity and set her down beside a pillar.

But for his prompt action, his gazing kinswoman would

have come into collision with the hindquarters of a white horse which Napoleon's Mameluke held by the bridle; the animal in its trappings of green velvet and gold stood almost under the arcade, some ten paces behind the rest of the horses in readiness for the Emperor's staff.

The young officer placed the father and daughter in front of the crowd in the first space to the right, and recommended them by a sign to the two veteran grenadiers on either side. Then he went on his way into the palace; a look of great joy and happiness had succeeded to his horror-stricken expression when the horse backed. Julie had given his hand a mysterious pressure; had she meant to thank him for the little service he had done her, or did she tell him: "After all, I shall really see you?" She bent her head quite graciously in response to the respectful bow by which the officer took leave of them before he vanished.

The old man stood a little behind his daughter. He looked grave. He seemed to have left the two young people together for some purpose of his own, and now he furtively watched the girl, trying to lull her into false security by appearing to give his whole attention to the magnificent sight in the Place du Carrousel. When Julie's eyes turned to her father with the expression of a schoolboy before his master, he answered her glance by a gay, kindly smile, but his own keen eyes had followed the officer under the arcade, and nothing of all that passed was lost upon him.

"What a grand sight!" said Julie in a low voice, as she pressed her father's hand; and, indeed, the pomp and picturesqueness of the spectacle in the Place du Carrousel drew the same exclamation from thousands upon thousands of spectators, all agape with wonder. Another array of sightseers, as tightly packed as the ranks behind the old noble and his daughter, filled the narrow strip of pavement by the railings which crossed the Place du Carrousel from side to side in a line parallel with the Tuileries. The dense living mass, varie-

gated by the colors of the women's dresses, traced out a bold line across the centre of the Place du Carrousel, filling in the fourth side of a vast parallelogram, surrounded on three sides by the Tuileries itself. Within the precincts thus railed off stood the regiments of the Old Guard about to be passed in review, drawn up opposite the palace in imposing blue columns, ten ranks in depth. Without and beyond in the Place du Carrousel stood several regiments likewise drawn up in parallel lines, ready to march in through the arch in the centre; the Triumphal Arch, where the bronze horses of St. Mark from Venice used to stand in those days. At either end, by the Louvre Galleries, the regimental bands were stationed, masked by the Polish Lancers then on duty.

The greater part of the vast graveled space was empty as an arena, ready for the evolutions of those silent masses disposed with the symmetry of military art. The sunlight blazed back from ten thousand bayonets in thin points of flame; the breeze ruffled the men's helmet plumes till they swayed like the crests of forest trees before a gale. The mute, glittering ranks of veterans were full of bright contrasting colors, thanks to their different uniforms, weapons, accoutrements, and aiguillettes; and the whole great picture, that miniature battle-field before the combat, was framed by the majestic towering walls of the Tuileries, which officers and men seemed to rival in their immobility. Involuntarily the spectator made the comparison between the walls of men and the walls of stone. The spring sunlight, flooding white masonry reared but yesterday and buildings centuries old, shone full likewise upon thousands of bronzed faces, each one with its own tale of perils passed, each one gravely expectant of perils to come.

The colonels of the regiments came and went alone before the ranks of heroes; and behind the masses of troops, checkered with blue and silver and gold and purple, the curious could discern the tricolor pennons on the lances of some half-a-dozen indefatigable Polish cavalry, rushing about like shep-

herds' dogs in charge of a flock, caracoling up and down between the troops and the crowd, to keep the gazers within their proper bounds. But for this slight flutter of movement, the whole scene might have been taking place in the courtyard of the palace of the Sleeping Beauty. The very spring breeze, ruffling up the long fur on the grenadiers' bearskins, bore witness to the men's immobility, as the smothered murmur of the crowd emphasized their silence. Now and again the jingling of Chinese bells, or a chance blow to a big drum, woke the reverberating echoes of the Imperial Palace with a sound like the far-off rumblings of thunder.

An indescribable, unmistakable enthusiasm was manifest in the expectancy of the multitude. France was about to take farewell of Napoleon on the eve of a campaign of which the meanest citizen foresaw the perils. The existence of the French Empire was at stake—to be, or not to be. The whole citizen population seemed to be as much inspired with this thought as that other armed population standing in serried and silent ranks in the inclosed space, with the Eagles and the genius of Napoleon hovering above them.

Those very soldiers were the hope of France, her last drop of blood; and this accounted for not a little of the anxious interest of the scene. Most of the gazers in the crowd had bidden farewell—perhaps farewell for ever—to the men who made up the rank and file of the battalions; and even those most hostile to the Emperor, in their hearts, put up fervent prayers to heaven for the glory of France; and those most weary of the struggle with the rest of Europe had left their hatreds behind as they passed in under the Triumphal Arch. They, too, felt that in the hour of danger Napoleon meant France herself.

The clock of the Tuileries struck the half-hour. In a moment the hum of the crowd ceased. The silence was so deep that you might have heard a child speak. The old noble and his daughter, wholly intent, seeming to live only

by their eyes, caught a distinct sound of spurs and clank of swords echoing up under the sonorous peristyle.

And suddenly there appeared a short, somewhat stout figure in a green uniform, white trousers, and riding boots; a man wearing on his head a cocked hat well-nigh as magically potent as its wearer; the broad red ribbon of the Legion of Honor rose and fell on his breast, and a short sword hung at his side. At one and the same moment the man was seen by all eyes in all parts of the square.

Immediately the drums beat a salute, both bands struck up a martial refrain, caught and repeated like a fugue by every instrument from the thinnest flutes to the largest drum. The clangor of that call to arms thrilled through every soul. The colors dropped and the men presented arms, one unanimous rhythmical movement shaking every bayonet from the foremost front near the palace to the last rank in the Place du Carrousel. The words of command sped from line to line like echoes. The whole enthusiastic multitude sent up a shout of "Long live the Emperor!"

Everything shook, quivered, and thrilled at last. Napoleon had mounted his horse. It was his movement that had put life into those silent masses of men; the dumb instruments had found a voice at his coming, the Eagles and the colors had obeyed the same impulse which had brought emotion into all faces.

The very walls of the high galleries of the old palace seemed to cry aloud, "Long live the Emperor!"

There was something preternatural about it—it was magic at work, a counterfeit presentment of the power of God; or rather it was a fugitive image of a reign itself so fugitive though brilliant.

And HE the centre of such love, such enthusiasm and devotion, and so many prayers, he for whom the sun had driven the clouds from the sky, was sitting there on his horse, three paces in front of his Golden Squadron, with the grand marshal

on his left, and the marshal-in-waiting on his right. Amid all the outburst of enthusiasm at his presence not a feature of his face appeared to alter.

"Oh! yes. At Wagram, in the thick of the firing, on the field of Borodino, among the dead, always as cool as a cucumber HE is!" said the grenadier, in answer to the questions with which the young girl plied him. For a moment Julie was absorbed in the contemplation of that face, so quiet in the security of conscious power. The Emperor noticed Mlle. de Chatillonest, and leaned to make some brief remark to Duroc, which drew a smile from the grand marshal. Then the review began.

If hitherto the young lady's attention had been divided between Napoleon's impassive face and the blue, red, and green ranks of troops, from this time forth she was wholly intent upon a young officer moving among the lines as they performed their swift symmetrical evolutions. She watched him gallop with tireless activity to and from the group where the plainly dressed Napoleon shone conspicuous. The officer rode a splendid black horse. His handsome sky-blue uniform marked him out amid the variegated multitude as one of the Emperor's orderly staff-officers. His gold lace glittered in the sunshine which lighted up the aigrette on his tall, narrow shako, so that the gazer might have compared him to a will-o'-the wisp, or to a visible spirit emanating from the Emperor to infuse movement into those battalions whose swaying bayonets flashed into flames; for, at a mere glance from his eyes, they broke and gathered again, surging to and fro like the waves in a bay, or again swept before him like the long ridges of high-crested waves which the vexed ocean directs against the shore.

When the manœuvres were over the officer galloped back at full speed, pulled up his horse, and awaited orders. He was not ten paces from Julie as he stood before the Emperor, much as General Rapp stands in Gérard's Battle of Austerlitz.

The young girl could behold her lover in all his soldierly splendor.

Colonel Victor d'Aiglemont, barely thirty years of age, was tall, slender, and well made. His well-proportioned figure never showed to better advantage than now as he exerted his strength to hold in the restive animal, whose back seemed to curve gracefully to the rider's weight. His brown masculine face possessed the indefinable charm of perfectly regular features combined with youth. The fiery eyes under the broad forehead, shaded by thick eyebrows and long lashes, looked like white ovals bordered by an outline of black. His nose had the delicate curve of an eagle's beak; the sinuous lines of the inevitable black mustache enhanced the crimson of the lips. The brown and tawny shades which overspread the wide high-colored cheeks told a tale of unusual vigor, and his whole face bore the impress of dashing courage. He was the very model which French artists seek to-day for the typical hero of Imperial France. The horse which he rode was covered with sweat; the animal's quivering head denoted the last degree of restiveness; his hind hoofs were set down wide apart and exactly in a line; he shook his long thick tail to the wind; in his fidelity to his master he seemed to be a visible presentment of that master's devotion to the Emperor.

Julie saw her lover watching intently for the Emperor's glances, and felt a momentary pang of jealousy, for as yet he had not given her a look. Suddenly at a word from his sovereign Victor gripped his horse's flanks and set out at a gallop, but the animal took fright at a shadow cast by a post, shied, backed, and reared up so suddenly that his rider was all but thrown off. Julie cried out, her face grew white, people looked at her curiously, but she saw no one, her eyes were fixed upon the too mettlesome beast. The officer gave the horse a sharp admonitory cut with the whip, and galloped off with Napoleon's order.

Julie was so absorbed, so dizzy with sights and sounds, that

unconsciously she clung to her father's arm so tightly that he could read her thoughts by the varying pressure of her fingers. When Victor was all but flung out of the saddle, she clutched her father with a convulsive grip as if she herself were in danger of falling, and the old man looked at his daughter's tell-tale face with dark and painful anxiety. Pity, jealousy, something even of regret stole across every drawn and wrinkled line of mouth and brow. When he saw the unwonted light in Julie's eyes, when that cry broke from her, when the convulsive grasp of her fingers drew away the veil and put him in possession of her secret, then with that revelation of her love there came surely some swift revelation of the future. Mournful forebodings could be read in his own face.

Julie's soul seemed at that moment to have passed into the officer's being. A torturing thought more cruel than any previous dread contracted the old man's pain-worn features, as he saw the glance of understanding that passed between the soldier and Julie. The girl's eyes were wet, her cheeks glowed with unwonted color. Her father turned abruptly and led her away into the garden of the Tuileries.

"Why, father," she cried, "there are still the regiments in the Place du Carrousel to be passed in review."

"No, child, all the troops are marching out."

"I think you are mistaken, father; Monsieur d'Aiglemont surely told them to advance——"

"But I feel ill, my child, and I do not care to stay."

Julie could readily believe the words when she glanced at his face; he looked quite worn out by his fatherly anxieties and cares.

"Are you feeling very ill?" she asked indifferently, her mind was so full of other thoughts.

"Every day is a reprieve for me, is it not?" returned her father.

"Now do you mean to make me miserable again by talking

about your death? I was in such spirits! Do pray get rid of those horrid, gloomy ideas of yours."

The father heaved a sigh. "Ah! spoiled child," he cried, "the best hearts are sometimes very cruel. We devote our whole lives to you, you are our one thought, we plan for your welfare, sacrifice our tastes to your whims, idolize you, give the very blood in our veins for you, and all this is nothing, is it? Alas! yes, you take it all as a matter of course. If we would always have your smiles and your disdainful love, we should need the power of God in heaven. Then comes another, a lover, a husband, and steals away your heart."

Julie looked in amazement at her father; he walked slowly along, and there was no light in the eyes which he turned upon her.

"You hide yourself even from us," he continued, "but, perhaps, also you hide yourself from yourself——"

"What do you mean by that, father?"

"I think that you have secrets from me, Julie. You love," he went on quickly, as he saw the color rise to her face. "Oh! I hoped that you would stay with your old father until he died. I hoped to keep you with me, still radiant and happy, to admire you as you were but so lately. So long as I knew nothing of your future I could believe in a happy lot for you; but now I cannot possibly take away with me a hope of happiness for your life, for you love the colonel even more than the cousin. I can no longer doubt it."

"And why should I be forbidden to love him?" asked Julie, with lively curiosity in her face.

"Ah, my Julie, you would not understand me," sighed the father.

"Tell me, all the same," said Julie, with an involuntary petulant gesture.

"Very well, child, listen to me. Girls are apt to imagine noble and enchanting and totally imaginary figures in their own minds; they have fanciful extravagant ideas about men,

and sentiment, and life; and then they innocently endow somebody or other with all the perfections of their day-dreams, and put their trust in him. They fall in love with this imaginary creature in the man of their choice; and then, when it is too late to escape from their fate, behold their first idol, the illusion made fair with their fancies, turns to an odious skeleton. Julie, I would rather have you fall in love with an old man than with the colonel. Ah! if you could but see things from the standpoint of ten years hence, you would admit that my old experience was right. I know what Victor is, that gayety of his is simply animal spirits—the gayety of the barracks. He has no ability, and he is a spend-thrift. He is one of those men whom heaven created to eat and digest four meals a day, to sleep, to fall in love with the first woman that comes to hand, and to fight. He does not understand life. His kind heart, for he has a kind heart, will perhaps lead him to give his purse to a sufferer or to a comrade; *but* he is careless, he has not the delicacy of heart which makes us slaves to a woman's happiness, he is ignorant, he is selfish. There are plenty of *buts*——"

"But, father, he must surely be clever, he must have ability, or he would not be a colonel——"

"My dear, Victor will be a colonel all his life. I have seen no one who appears to me to be worthy of you," the old father added, with a kind of enthusiasm.

He paused an instant, looked at his daughter, and added, "Why, my poor Julie, you are still too young, too fragile, too delicate for the cares and rubs of married life. D'Aiglemont's relations have spoiled him, just as your mother and I have spoiled you. What hope is there that you two could agree, with two imperious wills diametrically opposed to each other? You will be either the tyrant or the victim, and either alternative means, for a wife, an equal sum of misfortune. But you are modest and sweet-natured, you would yield from the first. In short," he added, in a quivering voice, "there is a grace

of feeling in you which would never be valued, and then——" he broke off, for the tears overcame him.

"Victor will give you pain through all the girlish qualities of your young nature," he went on, after a pause. "I know what soldiers are, my Julie; I have been in the army. In a man of that kind, love very seldom gets the better of old habits, due partly to the miseries amid which soldiers live, partly to the risks they run in a life of adventure."

"Then do you mean to cross my inclinations, do you, father?" asked Julie, half in earnest, half in jest. "Am I to marry to please you and not to please myself?"

"To please me!" cried her father, with a start of surprise. "To please *me*, child? when you will not hear the voice that upbraids you so tenderly very much longer! But I have always heard children impute personal motives for the sacrifices that their parents make for them. Marry Victor, my Julie! Some day you will bitterly deplore his ineptitude, his thriftless ways, his selfishness, his lack of delicacy, his inability to understand love, and countless troubles arising through him. Then, remember, that here, under these trees, your old father's prophetic voice sounded in your ears in vain."

He said no more; he had detected a rebellious shake of the head on his daughter's part. Both made several paces toward the carriage which was waiting for them at the grating. During that interval of silence, the young girl stole a glance at her father's face, and, little by little, her sullen brow cleared. The intense pain visible on his bowed forehead made a lively impression upon her.

"Father," she began in gentle, tremulous tones, "I promise to say no more about Victor until you have overcome your prejudices against him."

The old man looked at her in amazement. Two tears which filled his eyes overflowed down his withered cheeks. He could not take Julie in his arms in that crowded place; but he pressed her hand tenderly. A few minutes later, when

they had taken their places in the cabriolet, all the anxious thought which had gathered about his brow had completely disappeared. Julie's pensive attitude gave him far less concern than the innocent joy which had betrayed her secret during the review.

Nearly a year had passed since the Emperor's last review. In early March, 1814, a calèche* was rolling along the high road from Amboise to Tours. As the carriage came out from beneath the green-roofed aisle of walnut-trees by the post-house of La Frillière, the horses dashed forward with such speed that in a moment they gained the bridge built across the Cise at the point of its confluence with the Loire. There, however, they came to a sudden stand. One of the traces had given way in consequence of the furious pace at which the post-boy, obedient to his orders, had urged on four horses, the most vigorous of their breed. Chance, therefore, gave the two recently awakened occupants of the carriage an opportunity of seeing one of the most lovely landscapes along the enchanting banks of the Loire, and that at their full leisure.

At a glance the travelers could see to the right the whole winding course of the Cise meandering like a silver snake among the meadows, where the grass had taken the deep, bright green of early spring. To the left lay the Loire in all its glory. A chill morning breeze, ruffling the surface of the stately river, had fretted the broad sheets of water far and wide into a network of ripples, which caught the gleams of the sun, so that the green islets here and there in its course shone like gems set in a gold necklace. On the opposite bank the fair rich meadows of Touraine stretched away as far as the eye could see; the low hills of the Cher, the only limits to the view, lay on the far horizon, a luminous line against the clear blue sky. Tours itself, framed by the trees on the islands in a setting of spring leaves, seemed to rise like Venice out of

* Open carriage.

the waters, and her old cathedral towers soaring in air were blended with the pale fantastic cloud shapes in the sky.

Over the side of the bridge, where the carriage had come to a stand, the traveler looks along a line of cliffs stretching as far as Tours, Nature in some freakish mood must have raised these barriers of rock, undermined incessantly by the rippling Loire at their feet, for a perpetual wonder for spectators. The village of Vouvray nestles, as it were, among the clefts and crannies of the crags, which begin to describe a bend at the junction of the Loire and Cise. A whole population of vine-dressers lives, in fact, in appalling insecurity in holes in their jagged sides for the whole way between Vouvray and Tours. In some places there are three tiers of dwellings hollowed out, one above the other, in the rock, each row communicating with the next by dizzy staircases cut likewise in the face of the cliff. A little girl in a short, red petticoat runs out into her garden on the roof of another dwelling; you can watch a wreath of hearth-smoke curling up among the shoots and trails of the vines. Men are at work in their almost perpendicular patches of ground, an old woman sits tranquilly spinning under a blossoming almond tree on a crumbling mass of rock, and smiles down on the dismay of the travelers far below her feet. The cracks in the ground trouble her as little as the precarious state of the old wall, a pendent mass of loose stones, only kept in position by the crooked stems of its ivy mantle. The sound of coopers' mallets rings through the skyey caves; for here, where Nature stints human industry of soil, the soil is everywhere tilled, and everywhere fertile.

No view along the whole course of the Loire can compare with the rich landscape of Touraine, here outspread beneath the traveler's eyes. The triple picture, thus barely sketched in outline, is one of those scenes which the imagination engraves for ever upon the memory; let a poet fall under its charm, and he shall be haunted by visions which will re-

produce its romantic loveliness out of the vague substance of dreams.

As the carriage stopped on the bridge over the Cise, white sails came out here and there from among the islands in the Loire to add new grace to the perfect view. The subtle scent of the willows by the water's edge was mingled with the damp odor of the breeze from the river. The monotonous chant of a goatherd added a plaintive note to the sound of birds' songs in a chorus which never ends; the cries of the boatmen brought tidings of distant busy life. Here was Touraine in all its glory, and the very height of the splendor of spring. Here was the one peaceful district in France in those troublous days; for it was so unlikely that a foreign army should trouble its quiet that Touraine might be said to defy invasion.

As soon as the calèche stopped, a head covered with a foraging cap was put out of the window, and soon afterward an impatient military man flung open the carriage-door and sprang down into the road to pick a quarrel with the postillion, but the skill with which the Tourangeau was repairing the trace restored Colonel d'Aiglemont's equanimity. He went back to the carriage, stretched himself to relieve his benumbed muscles, yawned, looked about him, and finally laid a hand on the arm of a young woman warmly wrapped up in a furred pelisse.

"Come, Julie," he said hoarsely, "just wake up and take a look at this country. It is magnificent."

Julie put her head out of the window. She wore a traveling cap of sable fur. Nothing could be seen of her but her face, for the whole of her person was completely concealed by the folds of her fur pelisse. The young girl who tripped to the review at the Tuileries with light footsteps and joy and gladness in her heart was scarcely recognizable in Julie d'Aiglemont. Her face, delicate as ever, had lost the rose-color which once gave it so rich a glow. A few straggling locks of black hair, straightened out by the damp night-air, en-

hanced its dead whiteness, and all its life and sparkle seemed to be torpid. Yet her eyes glittered with preternatural brightness in spite of the violet shadows under the lashes upon her wan cheeks.

She looked out with indifferent eyes over the fields toward the Cher, at the islands in the river, at the line of the crags of Vouvray stretching along the Loire toward Tours; then she sank back as soon as possible into her seat in the calèche. She did not care to give a glance to the enchanting valley of the Cise.

"Yes, it is wonderful," she said, and out in the open air her voice sounded weak and faint to the last degree. Evidently she had had her way with her father, to her misfortune.

"Would you not like to live here, Julie?"

"Yes; here or anywhere," she answered listlessly.

"Do you feel ill?" asked Colonel d'Aiglemont.

"No, not at all," she answered with momentary energy; and, smiling at her husband, she added, "I should like to go to sleep."

Suddenly there came a sound of a horse galloping toward them. Victor d'Aiglemont dropped his wife's hand and turned to watch the bend in the road. No sooner had he taken his eyes from Julie's pale face than all the assumed gayety died out of it; it was as if a light had been extinguished. She felt no wish to look at the landscape, no curiosity to see the horseman who was galloping toward them at such a furious pace, and, ensconcing herself in her corner, stared out before her at the hindquarters of the post-horses, looking as blank as any Breton peasant listening to his rector's sermon.

Suddenly a young man riding a valuable horse came out from behind the clump of poplars and flowering briar-rose.

"It is an Englishman," remarked the colonel.

"Lord bless you, yes, general," said the post-boy; "he belongs to the race of fellows who have a mind to gobble up France, they say."

The stranger was one of the foreigners traveling in France at the time when Napoleon detained all British subjects within the limits of the Empire, by way of reprisals for the violation of the Treaty of Amiens, an outrage of international law perpetrated by the court of St. James. These prisoners, compelled to submit to the Emperor's pleasure, were not all suffered to remain in the houses where they were arrested, nor yet in the places of residence which at first they were permitted to choose. Most of the English colony in Touraine had been transplanted thither from different places where their presence was supposed to be inimical to the interests of the Continental Policy.

The young man, who was taking the tedium off the early morning hours on horseback, was one of these victims of bureaucratic tyranny. Two years previously, a sudden order from the Foreign Office had dragged him from Montpellier, whither he had gone on account of consumptive tendencies. He glanced at the Comte d'Aiglemont, saw that he was a military man, and deliberately looked away, turning his head somewhat abruptly toward the meadows by the Cise.

"The English are all as insolent as if the globe belonged to them," muttered the colonel. "Luckily, Soult will give them a thrashing directly."

The prisoner gave a glance to the calèche as he rode by. Brief though that glance was, he had yet time to notice the sad expression which lent an indefinable charm to the countess' pensive face. Many men are deeply moved by the mere semblance of suffering in a woman; they take the look of pain for a sign of constancy or of love. Julie herself was so much absorbed in the contemplation of the opposite cushion that she saw neither the horse nor the rider. The damaged trace meanwhile had been quickly and strongly repaired; the count stepped into his place again; and the post-boy, doing his best to make up for lost time, drove the carriage rapidly along the embankment. On they drove under the overhang-

ing cliffs, with their picturesque vine-dressers' huts and stores of wine maturing in their dark sides, till in the distance uprose the spire of the famous abbey of Marmoutiers, the retreat of St. Martin.

"What can that diaphanous milord want with us?" exclaimed the colonel, turning to assure himself that the horseman who had followed them from the bridge was the young Englishman.

After all, the stranger committed no breach of good manners by riding along on the footway, and Colonel d'Aiglemont was fain to lie back in his corner after sending a scowl in the Englishman's direction. But in spite of his hostile instincts, he could not help noticing the beauty of the animal and the graceful horsemanship of the rider. The young man's face was of that pale, fair-complexioned, insular type, which is almost girlish in the softness and delicacy of its color and texture. He was tall, thin, and fair-haired, dressed with the extreme and elaborate neatness characteristic of a man of fashion in prudish England. Any one might have thought that bashfulness rather than pleasure at the sight of the countess had called up that flush into his face. Once only Julie raised her eyes and looked at the stranger, and then only because she was in a manner compelled to do so, for her husband called upon her to admire the action of the thoroughbred. It so happened that their glances clashed; and the shy Englishman, instead of riding abreast of the carriage, fell behind on this, and followed them at a distance of a few paces.

Yet the countess had scarcely given him a glance; she saw none of the various perfections, human and equine, commended to her notice, and fell back again in the carriage with a slight movement of the eyelids intended to express her acquiescence in her husband's views. The colonel fell asleep again, and both husband and wife reached Tours without another word. Not one of those enchanting views of ever-

changing landscape through which they sped had drawn so much as a glance from Julie's eyes.

Mme. d'Aiglemont looked now and again at her sleeping husband. While she looked, a sudden jolt shook something down upon her knees. It was her father's portrait, a miniature which she wore suspended about her neck by a black cord. At the sight of it, the tears, till then kept back, overflowed her eyes, but no one, save perhaps the Englishman, saw them glitter there for a brief moment before they dried upon her pale cheeks.

Colonel d'Aiglemont was on his way to the South. Marshal Soult was repelling an English invasion of Béarn; and d'Aiglemont, the bearer of the Emperor's orders to the marshal, seized the opportunity of taking his wife as far as Tours to leave her with an elderly relative of his own, far away from the dangers threatening Paris.

Very shortly the carriage rolled over the paved road of Tours, over the bridge, along the Grande-Rue, and stopped at last before the old mansion of the *ci-devant* Marquise de Listomère-Landon.

The Marquise de Listomère-Landon, with her white hair, pale face, and shrewd smile, was one of those fine old ladies who still seem to wear the paniers of the eighteenth century, and affect caps of an extinct mode. They are nearly always caressing in their manner, as if the heyday of love still lingered on for these septuagenarian portraits of the age of Louis Quinze, with the faint perfume of marshal powder always clinging about them. Bigoted rather than pious, and less of bigots than they seem, women who can tell a story well and talk still better, their laughter comes more readily for an old memory than for a new jest—the present intrudes upon them.

When an old waiting-woman announced to the Marquise de Listomère-Landon (to give her the title which she was soon to resume) the arrival of a nephew whom she had not seen

since the outbreak of the war with Spain, the old lady took off her spectacles with alacrity, shut the "Galerie de l'ancienne Cour" (her favorite work), and recovered something like youthful activity, hastening out upon the flight of steps to greet the young couple there.

Aunt and niece exchanged a rapid glance of survey.

"Good-morning, dear aunt," cried the colonel, giving the old lady a hasty embrace. "I am bringing a young lady to put under your wing. I have come to put my treasure in your keeping. My Julie is neither jealous nor a coquette, she is as good as an angel. I hope that she will not be spoiled here," he added, suddenly interrupting himself.

"Scapegrace!" returned the marquise, with a satirical glance at her nephew.

She did not wait for her niece to approach her, but with a certain kindly graciousness went forward herself to kiss Julie, who stood there thoughtfully, to all appearance more embarrassed than curious concerning her new relation.

"So we are to make each other's acquaintance, are we, my love?" the marquise continued. "Do not be too much alarmed of me. I always try not to be an old woman with young people."

On the way to the drawing-room, the marquise ordered breakfast for her guests in provincial fashion; but the count checked his aunt's flow of words by saying soberly that he could only remain in the house while the horses were changing. On this the three hurried into the drawing-room. The colonel had barely time to tell the story of the political and military events which had compelled him to ask his aunt for a shelter for his young wife. While he talked on without interruption, the older lady looked from her nephew to her niece, and took the sadness in Julie's white face for grief at the enforced separation. "Eh! eh!" her looks seemed to say, "these young things are in love with each other."

The crack of the postillion's whip sounded outside in the

silent old grass-grown courtyard. Victor embraced his aunt once more and rushed out.

"Good-by, dear," he said, kissing his wife, who had followed him down to the carriage.

"Oh! Victor, let me come still farther with you," she pleaded coaxingly. "I do not want to leave you——"

"Can you seriously mean it?"

"Very well," said Julie, "since you wish it." The carriage disappeared.

"So you are very fond of my poor Victor?" said the marquise, interrogating her niece with one of those sagacious glances which dowagers give younger women.

"Alas, madame!" said Julie, "must one not love a man well indeed to marry him?"

The words were spoken with an artless accent which revealed either a pure heart or inscrutable depths. How could a woman, who had been the friend of Duclos and the Maréchal de Richelieu, refrain from trying to read the riddle of this marriage? Aunt and niece were standing on the steps, gazing after the fast-vanishing calèche. The look in the young countess' eyes did not mean love as the marquise understood it. The good lady was a Provençale, and her passions had been lively.

"So you were captivated by my good-for-nothing of a nephew?" she asked.

Involuntarily Julie shuddered, something in the experienced coquette's look and tone seemed to say that Mme. de Listomère-Landon's knowledge of her husband's character went perhaps deeper than his wife's. Mme. d'Aiglemont, in dismay, took refuge in this transparent dissimulation, ready to her hand, the first resource of an artless unhappiness. Mme. de Listomère appeared to be satisfied with Julie's answers; but in her secret heart she rejoiced to think that here was a love affair on hand to enliven her solitude, for that her niece had some amusing flirtation on foot she was fully convinced.

In the great drawing-room, hung with tapestry framed in strips of gilding, young Mme. d'Aiglemont sat before a blazing fire, behind a Chinese screen placed to shut out the cold draughts from the windows, and her heavy mood scarcely lightened. Among the old eighteenth-century furniture, under the antique paneled ceiling, it was not very easy to be gay. Yet the young Parisienne took a sort of pleasure in this entrance upon a life of complete solitude and in the solemn silence of the old provincial house. She exchanged a few words with the aunt, a stranger, to whom she had written a bride's letter on her marriage, and then sat as silent as if she had been listening to an opera. Not until two hours had been spent in an atmosphere of quiet befitting La Trappe did she suddenly awaken to a sense of uncourteous behavior, and bethink herself of the short answers which she had given her aunt. Mme. de Listomère, with the gracious tact characteristic of a bygone age, had respected her niece's mood. When Mme. d'Aiglemont became conscious of her shortcomings, the dowager sat knitting, though as a matter of fact she had several times left the room to superintend preparations in the Green Chamber, whither the countess' luggage had been transported; now, however, she had returned to her great armchair, and stole a glance from time to time at this young relative. Julie felt ashamed of giving way to irresistible broodings, and tried to earn her pardon by laughing at herself.

"My dear child, *we* know the sorrows of widowhood," returned her aunt. But only the eyes of forty years could have distinguished the irony hovering about the old lady's mouth.

Next morning the countess improved. She talked. Mme. de Listomère no longer despaired of fathoming the new-made wife, whom yesterday she had set down as a dull, unsociable creature, and discoursed on the delights of the country, of dances, of houses where they could visit. All that day the marquise's questions were so many snares; it was the old habit of

the old court, she could not help setting traps to discover her niece's character. For several days Julie, plied with temptations, steadfastly declined to seek amusement abroad; and much as the old lady's pride longed to exhibit her pretty niece, she was fain to renounce all hope of taking her into society, for the young countess was still in mourning for her father, and found in her loss and her mourning dress a pretext for her sadness and desire for seclusion.

By the end of a week the dowager admired Julie's angelic sweetness of disposition, her diffident charm, her indulgent temper, and thenceforward began to take a prodigious interest in the mysterious sadness gnawing at this young heart. The countess was one of those women who seem born to be loved and to bring happiness with them. Mme. de Listomère found her niece's society grown so sweet and precious that she doted upon Julie, and could no longer think of parting with her. A month sufficed to establish an eternal friendship between the two ladies. The dowager noticed, not without surprise, the changes that took place in Mme. d'Aiglemont; gradually her bright color died away and her face became dead white. Yet, Julie's spirits rose as the bloom faded from her cheeks. Sometimes the dowager's sallies provoked outbursts of merriment or peals of laughter, promptly repressed, however, by some clamorous thought.

Mme. de Listomère had guessed by this time that it was neither Victor's absence nor a father's death which threw a shadow over her niece's life; but her mind was so full of dark suspicions that she found it difficult to lay a finger upon the real cause of the mischief. Possibly truth is only discoverable by chance. A day came, however, at length when Julie flashed out before her aunt's astonished eyes into a complete forgetfulness of her marriage; she recovered the wild spirits of careless girlhood. Mme. de Listomère then and there made up her mind to fathom the depths of this soul, for its exceeding simplicity was as inscrutable as dissimulation.

Night was falling. The two ladies were sitting by the window which looked out upon the street, and Julie was looking thoughtful again, when some one went by on horseback.

"There goes one of your victims," said the marquise.

Mme. d'Aiglemont looked up; dismay and surprise blended in her face.

"He is a prim young Englishman, the Honorable Arthur Ormond, Lord Grenville's eldest son. His history is interesting. His physicians sent him to Montpellier in 1802; it was hoped that in that climate he might recover from the lung complaint which was gaining ground. He was detained, like all his fellow-countrymen, by Buonaparte when war broke out. That monster cannot live without fighting. The young Englishman, by way of amusing himself, took to studying his own complaint, which was believed to be incurable. By degrees he acquired a liking for anatomy and physic, and took quite a craze for that kind of thing, a most extraordinary taste in a man of quality, though the Regent certainly amused himself with chemistry! In short, Monsieur Arthur made astonishing progress in his studies; his health did the same under the faculty of Montpellier; he consoled his captivity, and at the same time his cure was thoroughly completed. They say that he spent two whole years in a cowshed, living on cresses and the milk of a cow brought from Switzerland, breathing as seldom as he could, and never speaking a word. Since he came to Tours he has lived quite alone; he is as proud as a peacock; but you have certainly made a conquest of him, for probably it is not on my account that he has ridden under the window twice every day since you have been here. He has certainly fallen in love with you."

That last phrase roused the countess like magic. Her involuntary start and smile took the marquise by surprise. So far from showing a sign of the instinctive satisfaction felt by the most strait-laced of women when she learns that she has destroyed the peace of mind of some male victim, there was a

hard, haggard expression in Julie's face—a look of repulsion amounting almost to loathing.

A woman who loves will put the whole world under the ban of Love's empire for the sake of the one whom she loves; but such a woman can laugh and jest; and Julie at that moment looked as if the memory of some recently escaped peril was too sharp and fresh not to bring with it a quick sensation of pain. Her aunt, by this time convinced that Julie did not love her nephew, was stupefied by the discovery that she loved nobody else. She shuddered lest a further discovery should show her Julie's heart disenchanted, lest the experience of a day, or perhaps of a night, should have revealed to a young wife the full extent of Victor's emptiness.

"If she has found him out, there is an end of it," thought the dowager. "My nephew will soon be made to feel the inconveniences of wedded life."

The marquise now proposed to convert Julie to the monarchical doctrines of the times of Louis Quinze; but a few hours later she discovered, or, more properly speaking, guessed, the not uncommon state of affairs, and the real cause of her niece's low spirits.

Julie turned thoughtful on a sudden, and went to her room earlier than usual. When her maid left her for the night, she still sat by the fire in the yellow velvet depths of a great chair, an old-world piece of furniture as well suited for sorrow as for happy people. Tears flowed, followed by sighs and meditation. After a while she drew a little table to her, sought writing materials, and began to write. The hours went by swiftly. Julie's confidences made to the sheet of paper seemed to cost her dear; every sentence set her dreaming, and at last she suddenly burst into tears. The clocks were striking two. Her head, grown heavy as a dying woman's, was bowed over her breast. When she raised it, her aunt appeared before her as suddenly as if she had stepped out of the background of tapestry upon the walls.

"What can be the matter with you, child?" asked the marquise. "Why are you sitting up so late? And why, in the first place, are you crying alone, at your age?"

Without further ceremony she sat down beside her niece, her eyes the while devouring the unfinished letter.

"Were you writing to your husband?"

"Do I know where he is?" returned the countess.

Her aunt thereupon took up the sheet and proceeded to read it. She had brought her spectacles; the deed was premeditated. The innocent writer of the letter allowed her to take it without the slightest remark. It was neither lack of dignity nor consciousness of secret guilt which left her thus without energy. Her aunt had come in upon her at a crisis. She was helpless; right or wrong, reticence and confidence, like all things else, were matters of indifference. Like some young maid who has heaped scorn upon her lover, and feels so lonely and sad when evening comes that she longs for him to come back or for a heart to which she can pour out her sorrow, Julie allowed her aunt to violate the seal which honor places upon an open letter, and sat musing while the marquise read on:

"My dear Louisa:—Why do you ask so often for the fulfillment of as rash a promise as two young and inexperienced girls could make? You say that you often ask yourself why I have given no answer to your questions for these six months. If my silence told you nothing, perhaps you will understand the reasons for it to-day, as you read the secrets which I am about to betray. I should have buried them for ever in the depths of my heart if you had not announced your own approaching marriage. You are about to be married, Louisa. The thought makes me shiver. Poor little one! marry, yes, and in a few months' time one of the keenest pangs of regret will be the recollection of a self which used to be, of the two young girls who sat one evening under one of the tallest oak-

trees on the hillside at Écouen, and looked along the fair valley at our feet in the light of the sunset, which caught us in its glow. We sat on a slab of rock in ecstasy, which sobered down into melancholy of the gentlest. You were the first to discover that the far-off sun spoke to us of the future. How inquisitive and how silly we were! Do you remember all the absurd things we said and did? We embraced each other; 'like lovers,' said we. We solemnly promised that the first bride should faithfully reveal to the other the mysteries of marriage, the joys which our childish minds imagined to be so delicious. That evening will complete your despair, Louisa. In those days you were young and beautiful and careless, if not radiantly happy; a few days of marriage, and you will be, what I am already—ugly, wretched, and old. Need I tell you how proud I was and how vain and glad to be married to Colonel Victor d'Aiglemont? And, beside, how could I tell you now? for I cannot remember that old self. A few moments turned my girlhood to a dream. All through the memorable day which consecrated a chain, the extent of which was hidden from me, my behavior was not free from reproach. Once and again my father tried to repress my spirits; the joy which I showed so plainly was thought unbefitting the occasion, my talk scarcely innocent, simply because I was so innocent. I played endless child's tricks with my bridal veil, my wreath, my gown. Left alone that night in the room whither I had been conducted in state, I planned a piece of mischief to tease Victor. While I awaited his coming, my heart beat wildly, as it used to do when I was a child stealing into the drawing-room on the last day of the old year to catch a glimpse of the New Year's gifts piled up there in heaps. When my husband came in and looked for me, my smothered laughter, ringing out from beneath the lace in which I had shrouded myself, was the last outburst of the delicious merriment which brightened our games in childhood——"

When the dowager had finished reading the letter, and after such a beginning the rest must have been sad indeed, she slowly laid her spectacles on the table, put the letter down beside them, and looked fixedly at her niece. Age had not dimmed the fire in those green eyes as yet.

"My little girl," she said, "a married woman cannot write such a letter as this to a young unmarried woman; it is scarcely proper——"

"So I was thinking," Julie broke in upon her aunt. "I felt ashamed of myself while you were reading it."

"If a dish at table is not to our taste, there is no occasion to disgust others with it, child," the old lady continued benignly, "especially when marriage has seemed to us all, from Eve downward, so excellent an institution. You have no mother?"

The countess trembled, then she raised her face meekly, and said—

"I have missed my mother many times already during the past year; but I have myself to blame, I would not listen to my father. He was opposed to my marriage; he disapproved of Victor as a son-in-law."

She looked at her aunt. The old face was lighted up with a kindly look, and a thrill of joy dried Julie's tears. She held out her young, soft hand to the old marquise, who seemed to ask for it, and the understanding between the two women was completed by the close grasp of their fingers.

"Poor orphan child!"

The words came like a final flash of enlightenment to Julie. It seemed to her that she heard her father's prophetic voice again.

"Your hands are burning! Are they always like this?" asked the marquise.

"The fever only left me seven or eight days ago."

"You had a fever upon you, and said nothing about it to me!"

"I have had it for a year," said Julie, with a kind of timid anxiety.

"My good little angel, then your married life hitherto has been one long time of suffering?"

Julie did not venture to reply, but an affirmative sign revealed the whole truth.

"Then you are unhappy?"

"Oh! no, no, aunt. Victor loves me, he almost idolizes me, and I adore him, he is so kind."

"Yes, you love him; but you avoid him, do you not?"

"Yes—— sometimes. He seeks me too often."

"And often when you are alone you are troubled with the fear that he may suddenly break in upon your solitude?"

"Alas! yes, aunt. But, indeed, I love him, I do assure you."

"Do you not, in your own thoughts, blame yourself because you find it impossible to share his pleasures? Do you never think at times that marriage is a heavier yoke than an illicit passion could be?"

"Oh! that is just it," she wept. "It is all a riddle to me, and can you guess it all? My faculties are benumbed, I have no ideas, I can scarcely see at all. I am weighed down by vague dread, which freezes me till I cannot feel, and keeps me in continual torpor. I have no voice with which to pity myself, no words to express my trouble. I suffer, and I am ashamed to suffer when Victor is happy at my cost."

"Babyish nonsense and rubbish, all of it!" exclaimed the aunt, and a gay smile, an after-glow of the joys of her own youth, suddenly lighted up her withered face.

"And do you too laugh!" the younger woman cried despairingly.

"It was just my own case," the marquise returned promptly. "And now that Victor has left you, you have become a girl again, recovering a tranquillity without pleasure and without pain, have you not?"

Julie opened wide eyes of bewilderment.

"In fact, my angel, you adore Victor, do you not? But still you would rather be a sister to him than a wife, and, in short, your marriage is emphatically not a success?"

"Well—no, aunt. But why do you smile?"

"Oh! you are right, poor child! There is nothing very amusing in all this. Your future would be big with more than one mishap if I had not taken you under my protection, if my old experience of life had not guessed the very innocent cause of your troubles. My nephew did not deserve his good-fortune, the blockhead! In the reign of our well-beloved Louis Quinze, a young wife in your position would very soon have punished her husband for behaving like a ruffian. The selfish creature! The men who serve under this Imperial tyrant are all of them ignorant boors. They take brutality for gallantry; they know no more of women than they know of love; and imagine that, because they go out to face death on the morrow, they may dispense to-day with all consideration and attentions for us. The time was when a man could love and die too at the proper time. My niece, I will form you. I will put an end to this unhappy divergence between you, a natural thing enough, but it would end in mutual hatred and desire for a divorce, always supposing that you did not die on the way to despair."

Julie's amazement equaled her surprise as she listened to her aunt. She was surprised by her language, dimly divining rather than appreciating the wisdom of the words she heard, and very much dismayed to find that this relative, out of a great experience, passed judgment upon Victor as her father had done, though in somewhat milder terms. Perhaps some quick prevision of the future crossed her mind; doubtless, at any rate, she felt the heavy weight of the burden which must inevitably overwhelm her, for she burst into tears and sprang to the old lady's arms. "Be my mother," she sobbed.

The aunt shed no tears. The Revolution had left old ladies

of the Monarchy but few tears to shed. Love, in bygone days, and the Terror at a later time, had familiarized them with extremes of joy and anguish in such a sort that, amid the perils of life, they preserved their dignity and coolness, a capacity for sincere but undemonstrative affection which never disturbed their well-bred self-possession, and a dignity of demeanor which a younger generation has done very ill to discard.

The dowager took Julie in her arms and kissed her on the forehead with a tenderness and pity more often found in women's ways and manner than in their hearts. Then she coaxed her niece with kind, soothing words, assured her of a happy future, lulled her with promises of love, and put her to bed as if she had not been a niece, but a daughter, a much-loved daughter whose hopes and cares she had made her own. Perhaps the old marquise had found her own youth and inexperience and beauty again in this nephew's wife. And the countess fell asleep, happy to have found a friend, nay, a mother, to whom she could tell everything freely.

Next morning, when the two women kissed each other with heartfelt kindness, and that look of intelligence which marks a real advance in friendship, a closer intimacy between two souls, they heard the sound of horsehoofs, and, turning both together, saw the young Englishman ride slowly past the window, after his wont. Apparently he had made a certain study of the life led by the two lonely women, for he never failed to ride by as they sat at breakfast, and again at dinner. His horse slackened pace of its own accord, and, for the space of time required to pass the two windows in the room, its rider turned a melancholy look upon the countess, who seldom deigned to take the slightest notice of him. Not so the marquise. Minds not necessarily little find it difficult to resist the little curiosity which fastens upon the most trifling event that enlivens provincial life; and the Englishman's mute way of expressing his timid, earnest love tickled Mme. de Listomère.

For her the periodically recurrent glance became a part of the day's routine, hailed daily with new jests. As the two women sat down to table, both of them looked out at the same moment. This time Julie's eyes met Arthur's with such a precision of sympathy that the color rose to her face. The stranger immediately urged his horse into a gallop and went.

"What is to be done, madame?" asked Julie. "People see this Englishman go past the house, and they will take it for granted that I——"

"Yes," interrupted her aunt.

"Well, then, could I not tell him to discontinue his promenades?"

"Would not that be a way of telling him that he was dangerous? You might put that notion into his head. And, beside, can you prevent a man from coming and going as he pleases? Our meals shall be served in another room to-morrow; and, when this young gentleman sees us no longer, there will be an end of making love to you through the window. There, dear child, that is how a woman of the world does."

But the measure of Julie's misfortune was to be filled. The two women had scarcely risen from table when Victor's man arrived in hot haste from Bourges with a letter for the countess from her husband. The servant had ridden by unfrequented ways.

Victor sent his wife news of the downfall of the Empire and the capitulation of Paris. He himself had gone over to the Bourbons, and all France was welcoming them back with transports of enthusiasm. He could not go so far as Tours, but he begged her to come at once to join him at Orleans, where he hoped to be in readiness with passports for her. His servant, an old soldier, would be her escort as far as Orleans; he (Victor) believed that the road was still open.

"You have not a moment to lose, madame," said the man. "The Prussians, Austrians, and English are about to effect a junction either at Blois or at Orleans."

A few hours later, Julie's preparations were made, and she started out upon her journey in an old traveling carriage lent by her aunt.

"Why should you not come with us to Paris?" she asked, as she put her arms about the marquise. "Now that the Bourbons have come back, you would be——"

"Even if there had not been this unhoped-for return, I should still have gone to Paris, my poor child, for my advice is only too necessary to both you and Victor. So I shall make all my preparations for rejoining you there."

Julie set out. She took her maid with her, and the old soldier galloped beside the carriage as escort. At nightfall, as they changed horses for the last stage before Blois, Julie grew uneasy. All the way from Amboise she had heard the sound of wheels behind them, a carriage following hers had kept at the same distance. She stood on the step and looked out to see who her traveling companions might be, and in the moonlight saw Arthur standing three paces away, gazing fixedly at the chaise which contained her. Again their eyes met. The countess hastily flung herself back in her seat, but a feeling of dread set her pulses throbbing. It seemed to her, as to most innocent and inexperienced young wives, that she was herself to blame for this love which she had all unwittingly inspired. With this thought came an instinctive terror, perhaps a sense of her own helplessness before aggressive audacity. One of a man's strongest weapons is the terrible power of compelling a woman to think of him when her naturally lively imagination takes alarm or offense at the thought that she is followed.

The countess bethought herself of her aunt's advice, and made up her mind that she would not stir from her place during the rest of the journey; but every time the horses were changed she heard the Englishman pacing round the two carriages, and again upon the road heard the importunate sound of the wheels of his calèche. Julie soon began to think that,

when once reunited to her husband, Victor would know how to defend her against this singular persecution.

"Yet suppose that, in spite of everything, this young man does not love me?" This was the thought that came last of all.

No sooner did she reach Orleans than the Prussians stopped the chaise. It was wheeled into an innyard and put under a guard of soldiers. Resistance was out of the question. The foreign soldiers made the three travelers understand by signs that they were obeying orders, and that no one could be allowed to leave the carriage. For about two hours the countess sat in tears, a prisoner surrounded by the guard, who smoked, laughed, and occasionally stared at her with insolent curiosity. At last, however, she saw her captors fall away from the carriage with a sort of respect, and heard at the same time the sound of horses entering the yard. Another moment, and a little group of foreign officers, with an Austrian general at their head, gathered about the door of the traveling carriage.

"Madame," said the general, "pray accept our apologies. A mistake has been made. You may continue your journey withour fear; and here is a passport which will spare you all further annoyance of any kind."

Tremblingly the countess took the paper and faltered out some vague words of thanks. She saw Arthur, now wearing an English uniform, standing beside the general, and could not doubt that this prompt deliverance was due to him. The young Englishman himself looked half-glad, half-melancholy; his face was turned away, and he only dared to steal an occasional glance at Julie's face.

Thanks to the passport, Mme. d'Aiglemont reached Paris without further misadventure, and there she found her husband. Victor d'Aiglemont, released from his oath of allegiance to the Emperor, had met with a most flattering reception from the Comte d'Artois, recently appointed lieutenant-general

of the kingdom by his brother, Louis XVIII. D'Aiglemont received a commission in the Life Guards, equivalent to the rank of general. But, amid the rejoicings over the return of the Bourbons, fate dealt poor Julie a terrible blow. The death of the Marquise de Listomère-Landon was an irreparable loss. The old lady died of joy and of an accession of gout to the heart when the Duc d'Angoulême came back to Tours, and the one living being entitled by her age to enlighten Victor, the woman who, by discreet counsels, might have brought about perfect unanimity of husband and wife, was dead; and Julie felt the full extent of her loss. Henceforward she must stand alone between herself and her husband. But she was young and timid; there could be no doubt of the result, or that from the first she would elect to bear her lot in silence. The very perfection of her character forbade her to venture to swerve from her duties or to attempt to inquire into the cause of her sufferings, for to put an end to them would have been to venture on delicate ground, and Julie's girlish modesty shrank from the thought.

A word as to M. d'Aiglemont's destinies under the Restoration.

How many men are there whose utter incapacity is a secret kept from most of their acquaintance. For such as these high rank, high office, illustrious birth, a certain veneer of politeness, and considerable reserve of manner, or the prestige of great fortunes, are but so many sentinels to turn back critics who would penetrate to the presence of the real man. Such men are like kings, in that their real figure, character, and life can never be known nor justly appreciated, because they are always seen from too near or too far. Factitious merit has a way of asking questions and saying little; and understands the art of putting others forward to save the necessity of posing before them; then, with a happy knack of its own, it draws and attaches others by the thread of the ruling passion or self-interest, keeping men of far greater abilities in play

like puppets, and despising those whom it has brought down to its own level. The petty fixed idea naturally prevails; it has the advantage of persistence over the plasticity of great thoughts.

The observer who should seek to estimate and appraise the negative values of these empty heads needs subtlety rather than superior wit for the task; patience is a more necessary part of his judicial outfit than great mental grasp, cunning and tact rather than any elevation or greatness of ideas. Yet skillfully as such usurpers can cover and defend their weak points, it is difficult to delude wife and mother and children and the house-friend of the family; fortunately for them, however, these persons almost always keep a secret which in a manner touches the honor of all, and not unfrequently go so far as to help to foist the imposture upon the public. And if, thanks to such domestic conspiracy, many a noodle passes current for a man of ability, on the other hand many another who has real ability is taken for a noodle to redress the balance, and the total average of this kind of false coin in circulation in the state is a pretty constant quantity.

Bethink yourself now of the part to be played by a clever woman quick to think and feel, mated with a husband of this kind, and can you not see a vision of lives full of sorrow and self-sacrifice? Nothing upon earth can repay such hearts so full of love and tender tact. Put a strong-willed woman in this wretched situation, and she will force a way out of it for herself by a crime, like Catherine II., whom men nevertheless style "the Great." But these women are not all seated upon thrones, they are for the most part doomed to domestic unhappiness none the less terrible because obscure.

Those who seek consolation in this present world for their woes often effect nothing but a change of ills if they remain faithful to their duties; or they commit a sin if they break the laws for their pleasure. All these reflections are applicable to Julie's domestic life.

Before the fall of Napoleon nobody was jealous of d'Aiglemont. He was one colonel among many, an efficient orderly staff-officer, as good a man as you could find for a dangerous mission, as unfit as well could be for an important command. D'Aiglemont was looked upon as a dashing soldier such as the Emperor liked, the kind of man whom his mess usually calls "a good fellow." The Restoration gave him back his title of marquis, and did not find him ungrateful; he followed the Bourbons into exile at Ghent, a piece of logical loyalty which falsified the horoscope drawn for him by his late father-in-law, who predicted that Victor would remain a colonel all his life. After the Hundred Days he received the appointment of lieutenant-general, and for the second time became a marquis; but it was M. d'Aiglemont's ambition to be a peer of France. He adopted, therefore, the maxims and the politics of the "Conservateur," cloaked himself in dissimulation which hid nothing (there being nothing to hide), cultivated gravity of countenance and the art of asking questions and saying little, and was taken for a man of profound wisdom. Nothing drew him from his intrenchments behind the forms of politeness; he laid in a provision of formulas, and made lavish use of his stock of the catchwords coined at need in Paris to give fools the small change for the ore of great ideas and events. Among men of the world he was reputed a man of taste and discernment; and as a bigoted upholder of aristocratic opinions he was held up for a noble character. If by chance he slipped now and again into his old light-heartedness or levity, others were ready to discover an undercurrent of diplomatic intention beneath his inanity and silliness. "Oh! he only says exactly as much as he means to say," thought these excellent people.

So d'Aiglemont's defects and good qualities stood him alike in good stead. He did nothing to forfeit a high military reputation gained by his dashing courage, for he had never been a commander-in-chief. Great thoughts surely were en-

graven upon that manly aristocratic countenance, which imposed upon every one but his own wife. And when everybody else believed in the Marquis d'Aiglemont's imaginary talents, the marquis persuaded himself before he had done that he was one of the most remarkable men at court, where, thanks to his purely external qualifications, he was in favor and taken at his own valuation.

At home, however, M. d'Aiglemont was modest. Instinctively he felt that his wife, young though she was, was his superior; and out of this involuntary respect there grew an occult power which the marquise was obliged to wield in spite of all her efforts to shake off the burden. She became her husband's adviser, the director of his actions and his fortunes. It was an unnatural position; she felt it as something of a humiliation, a source of pain to be buried in the depths of her heart. From the first her delicately feminine instinct told her that it is a far better thing to obey a man of talent than to lead a fool; and that a young wife compelled to act and think like a man is neither man nor woman, but a being who lays aside all the charms of her womanhood along with its misfortunes, yet acquires none of the privileges which our laws give to the stronger sex. Beneath the surface her life was a bitter mockery. Was she not compelled to protect her protector, to worship a hollow idol, a poor creature who flung her the love of a selfish husband as the wages of her continual self-sacrifice; who saw nothing in her but the woman; and who either did not think it worth while, or (wrong quite as deep) did not think at all of troubling himself about her pleasures, of inquiring into the cause of her low spirits and dwindling health? And the marquis, like most men who chafe under a wife's superiority, saved his self-love by arguing from Julie's physical feebleness a corresponding lack of mental power, for which he was pleased to pity her; and he would cry out upon fate which had given him a sickly girl for a wife. The executioner posed, in fact, as the victim.

All the burdens of this dreary lot fell upon the marquise, who still must smile upon her foolish lord, and deck a house of mourning with flowers, and make a parade of happiness in a countenance wan with secret torture. And with this sense of responsibility for the honor of both, with the magnificent immolation of self, the young marquise unconsciously acquired a wifely dignity, a consciousness of virtue which became her safeguard amid many dangers.

Perhaps, if her heart were sounded to the very depths, this intimate closely hidden wretchedness, following upon her unthinking girlish first-love, had aroused in her an abhorrence of passion; possibly she had no conception of its rapture, nor of forbidden but frenzied bliss for which some women will renounce all the laws of prudence and the principles of conduct upon which society is based. She put from her like a dream the thought of bliss and tender harmony of love promised by Mme. de Listomère-Landon's mature experience, and waited resignedly for the end of her troubles with a hope that she might die young.

Her health had declined daily since her return from Touraine; her life seemed to be measured to her in suffering; yet her ill-health was graceful, her malady seemed little more than languor, and might well be taken by careless eyes for a fine lady's whim of invalidism.

Her doctors had condemned her to keep to the sofa, and there among her flowers lay the marquise, fading as they faded. She was not strong enough to walk, nor to bear the open air, and only went out in a closed carriage. Yet with all the marvels of modern luxury and invention about her, she looked more like an indolent queen than an invalid. A few of her friends, half in love perhaps with her sad plight and her fragile look, sure of finding her at home, and speculating no doubt upon her future restoration to health, would come to bring her the news of the day, and keep her informed of the thousand and one small events which fill life in Paris with variety.

Her melancholy, deep and real though it was, was still the melancholy of a woman rich in many ways. The Marquise d'Aiglemont was like some bright flower, with a dark insect gnawing at its root.

Occasionally she went into society, not to please herself, but in obedience to the exigencies of the position which her husband aspired to take. In society her beautiful voice and the perfection of her singing could always gain the social success so gratifying to a young woman; but what was social success to her, who drew nothing from it for her heart or her hopes? Her husband did not care for music. And, moreover, she seldom felt at her ease in salons, where her beauty attracted homage not wholly disinterested. Her position excited a sort of cruel compassion, a morbid curiosity. She was suffering from an inflammatory complaint not infrequently fatal, for which our nosology as yet has found no name, a complaint spoken of among women in confidential whispers. In spite of the silence in which her life was spent, the cause of her ill-health was no secret. She was still but a girl in spite of her marriage; the slightest glance threw her into confusion. In her endeavor not to blush, she was always laughing, always apparently in high spirits; she would never admit that she was not perfectly well, and anticipated questions as to her health by shame-stricken subterfuges.

In 1817, however, an event took place which did much to alleviate Julie's hitherto deplorable existence. A daughter was born to her, and she determined to nurse her child herself. For two years motherhood, its all-absorbing multiplicity of cares and anxious joys, made life less hard for her. She and her husband lived necessarily apart. Her physicians predicted improved health, but the marquise herself put no faith in these auguries based on theory. Perhaps, like many a one for whom life has lost its sweetness, she looked forward to death as a happy termination of the drama.

But with the beginning of the year 1819 life grew harder

than ever. Even while she congratulated herself upon the negative happiness which she had contrived to win, she caught a terrifying glimpse of yawning depths below it. She had passed by degrees out of her husband's life. Her fine tact and her prudence told her that misfortune must come, and that not singly, of this cooling of an affection already lukewarm and wholly selfish. Sure though she was of her ascendency over Victor, and certain as she felt of his unalterable esteem, she dreaded the influence of unbridled passions upon a head so empty, so full of rash self-conceit.

Julie's friends often found her absorbed in prolonged musings; the less clairvoyant among them would jestingly ask her what she was thinking about, as if a young wife would think of nothing but frivolity, as if there were not almost always a depth of seriousness in a mother's thoughts. Unhappiness, like great happiness, induces dreaming. Sometimes as Julie played with her little Helene, she would gaze darkly at her, giving no reply to the childish questions in which a mother delights, questioning the present and the future as to the destiny of this little one. Then some sudden recollection would bring back the scene of the review at the Tuileries and fill her eyes with tears. Her father's prophetic warnings rang in her ears, and conscience reproached her that she had not recognized its wisdom. Her troubles had all come of her own wayward folly, and often she knew not which among so many was the hardest to bear. The sweet treasures of her soul were unheeded, and not only so, she could never succeed in making her husband understand her, even in the commonest everyday things. Just as the power to love developed and grew strong and active, a legitimate channel for the affections of her nature was denied her, and wedded love was extinguished in grave physical and mental sufferings. Add to this that she now felt for her husband that pity closely bordering upon contempt, which withers all affection at last. Even if she had not learned from conversations with some of her friends, from

examples in life, from sundry occurrences in the great world, that love can bring ineffable bliss, her own wounds would have taught her to divine the pure and deep happiness which binds two kindred souls each to each.

In the picture which her memory traced of the past, Arthur's frank face stood out daily nobler and purer; it was but a flash, for upon that recollection she dared not dwell. The young Englishman's shy, silent love for her was the one event since her marriage which had left a lingering sweetness in her darkened and lonely heart. It may be that all the blighted hopes, all the frustrated longings which gradually clouded Julie's mind, gathered, by a not unnatural trick of imagination, about this man—whose very manners, sentiments, and character seemed to have so much in common with her own. This idea still presented itself to her mind fitfully and vaguely, like a dream; yet from that dream, which always ended in a sigh, Julie awoke to greater wretchedness, to keener consciousness of the latent anguish brooding beneath her imaginary bliss.

Occasionally her self-pity took wilder and more daring flights. She determined to have happiness at any cost; but still more often she lay a helpless victim of an indescribable numbing stupor, the words she heard had no meaning to her, or the thoughts which arose in her mind were so vague and indistinct that she could not find language to express them. Balked of the wishes of her heart, realities jarred harshly upon her girlish dreams of life, but she was obliged to devour her tears. To whom could she make complaint? Of whom be understood? She possessed, moreover, that highest degree of woman's sensitive pride, the exquisite delicacy of feeling which silences useless complainings and declines to use an advantage to gain a triumph which can only humiliate both victor and vanquished.

Julie tried to endow M. d'Aiglemont with her own abilities and virtues, flattering herself that thus she might enjoy the

happiness lacking in her lot. All her woman's ingenuity and tact was employed in making the best of the situation; pure waste of pains unsuspected by him, whom she thus strengthened in his despotism. There were moments when misery became an intoxication, expelling all ideas, all self-control; but, fortunately, sincere piety always brought her back to one supreme hope; she found a refuge in the belief in a future life, a wonderful thought which enabled her to take up her painful task afresh. No elation of victory followed those terrible inward battles and throes of anguish; no one knew of those long hours of sadness; her haggard glances met no response from human eyes, and during the brief moments snatched by chance for weeping, her bitter tears fell unheeded and in solitude.

One evening in January, 1820, the marquise became aware of the full gravity of a crisis, gradually brought on by force of circumstances. When a husband and wife know each other thoroughly, and their relation has long been a matter of use and wont, when the wife has learned to interpret every slightest sign, when her quick insight discerns thoughts and facts which her husband keeps from her, a chance word, or a remark so carelessly let fall in the first instance, seems, upon subsequent reflection, like the swift breaking out of light. A wife not seldom suddenly awakes upon the brink of a precipice or in the depths of the abyss; and thus it was with the marquise. She was feeling glad to have been left to herself for some days, when the real reason of her solitude flashed upon her. Her husband, whether fickle and tired of her or generous and full of pity for her, was hers no longer.

In the moment of that discovery she forgot herself, her sacrifices, all that she had passed through, she remembered only that she was a mother. Looking forward, she thought of her daughter's fortune, of the future welfare of the one creature through whom some gleams of happiness came to her, of her Helene, the only possession which bound her to life.

Then Julie wished to live to save her child from a step-mother's terrible thralldom, which might crush her darling's life. Upon this new vision of threatened possibilities followed one of those paroxysms of thought at fever-heat which consume whole years of life.

Henceforward husband and wife were doomed to be separated by a whole world of thought, and all the weight of that world she must bear alone. Hitherto she had felt sure that Victor loved her, in so far as he could be said to love; she had been the slave of his pleasures which she did not share; to-day the satisfaction of knowing that she purchased his contentment with her tears was hers no longer. She was alone in the world, nothing was left to her now but a choice of evils. In the calm stillness of the night her despondency drained her of all her strength. She rose from her sofa beside the dying fire and stood in the lamplight gazing, dry-eyed, at her child, when M. d'Aiglemont came in. He was in high spirits. Julie called to him to admire Helene as she lay asleep, but he met his wife's enthusiasm with a commonplace—

"All children are nice at that age."

He closed the curtain about the cot after a careless kiss on the child's forehead. Then he turned his eyes on Julie, took her hand and drew her to sit beside him on the sofa, where she had been sitting with such dark thoughts surging up in her mind.

"You are looking very handsome to-night, Mme. d'Aiglemont," he exclaimed, with the gayety intolerable to the marquise, who knew its emptiness so well.

"Where have you spent the evening?" she asked, with a pretense of complete indifference.

"At Madame de Sérizy's."

He had taken up a fire-screen and was looking intently at the gauze. He had not noticed the traces of tears on his wife's face. Julie shuddered. Words could not express the

overflowing torrent of thoughts which must be forced down into inner depths.

"Madame de Sérizy is giving a concert on Monday, and is dying for you to go. You have not been anywhere for some time past, and that is enough to set her longing to see you at her house. She is a good-natured woman, and very fond of you. I should be glad if you would go; I all but promised that you should——"

"I will go."

There was something so penetrating, so significant in the tones of Julie's voice, in her accent, in the glance that went with the words, that Victor, startled out of his indifference, stared at his wife in astonishment.

That was all. Julie had guessed that it was Mme. de Sérizy who had stolen her husband's heart from her. Her brooding despair benumbed her. She appeared to be deeply interested in the fire. Victor meanwhile still played with the fire-screen. He looked bored, like a man who has enjoyed himself elsewhere, and brought home the consequent lassitude. He yawned once or twice, then he took up a candle in one hand, and with the other languidly sought his wife's neck for the usual embrace; but Julie stooped and received the good-night kiss upon her forehead; the formal, loveless grimace seemed hateful to her at that moment.

As soon as the door closed upon Victor, his wife sank into a seat. Her limbs tottered beneath her, she burst into tears. None but those who have endured the torture of some such scene can fully understand the anguish that it means or divine the horror of the long-drawn tragedy arising out of it.

Those simple, foolish words, the silence that followed between the husband and wife, the marquis' gesture and expression, the way in which he sat before the fire, his attitude as he made that futile attempt to put a kiss on his wife's throat, all these things made up a dark hour for Julie, and the catastrophe of the drama of her sad and lonely life. In her mad-

ness she knelt down before the sofa, burying her face in it to shut out everything from sight, and prayed to heaven, putting a new significance into the words of the evening prayer, till it became a cry from the depths of her own soul, which would have gone to her husband's heart if he had heard it.

The following week she spent in deep thought for her future, utterly overwhelmed by this new trouble. She made a study of it, trying to discover a way to regain her ascendency over the marquis, scheming how to live long enough to watch over her daughter's happiness, yet to live true to her own heart. Then she made up her mind. She would struggle with her rival. She would shine once more in society. She would feign the love which she could no longer feel, she would captivate her husband's fancy; and, when she had lured him into her power, she would coquet with him like a capricious mistress who takes delight in tormenting a lover. This hateful strategy was the only possible way out of her troubles. In this way she would become mistress of the situation; she would prescribe her own sufferings at her good pleasure, and reduce them by enslaving her husband and bringing him under a tyrannous yoke. She felt not the slightest remorse for the hard life which he should lead. At a bound she reached cold, calculating indifference—for her daughter's sake. She had gained a sudden insight into the treacherous, lying arts of degraded women; the wiles of coquetry, the revolting cunning which arouses such profound hatred in men at the mere suspicion of innate corruption in a woman.

Julie's feminine vanity, her interests, and a vague desire to inflict punishment, all wrought unconsciously with the mother's love within her to force her into a path where new sufferings awaited her. But her nature was too noble, her mind too fastidious, and, above all things, too open, to be the accomplice of these frauds for very long. Accustomed as she was to self-scrutiny, at the first step in vice—for vice it was—the cry of conscience must inevitably drown the clamor

of the passions and of selfishness. Indeed, in a young wife whose heart is still pure, whose love has never been mated, the very sentiment of motherhood is overpowered by modesty. Modesty; is not all womanhood summed up in that? But just now Julie would not see any danger, anything wrong, in her new life.

She went to Mme. de Sérizy's concert. Her rival had expected to see a pallid, drooping woman. The marquise wore rouge, and appeared in all the splendor of a toilet which enhanced her beauty.

Mme. de Sérizy was one of those women who claim to exercise a sort of sway over fashions and society in Paris; she issued her decrees, saw them received in her own circle, and it seemed to her that all the world obeyed them. She aspired to epigram, she set up for an authority in matters of taste. Literature, politics, men and women, all alike were submitted to her censorship, and the lady herself appeared to defy the censorship of others. Her house was in every respect a model of good taste.

Julie triumphed over the countess in her own salon, filled as it was with beautiful women and women of fashion. Julie's liveliness and sparkling wit gathered all the most distinguished men in the rooms about her. Her costume was faultless, to the despair of the women, who one and all envied her the fashion of her dress, and attributed the moulded outline of her bodice to the genius of some unknown dressmaker, for women would rather believe in miracles worked by the science of chiffons than in the grace and perfection of the form beneath.

When Julie went to the piano to sing Desdemona's song, the men in the rooms flocked about her to hear the celebrated voice so long mute, and there was a deep silence. The marquise saw the heads clustered thickly in the doorways, saw all eyes turned upon her, and a sharp thrill of excitement quivered through her. She looked for her husband, gave him a coquet-

tish side-glance, and it pleased her to see that his vanity was gratified to no small degree. In the joy of triumph she sang the first part of "Al piu salice." Her audience was enraptured. Never had Malibran or Pasta sung with expression and intonation so perfect. But at the beginning of the second part she glanced over the listening groups and saw—Arthur. He never took his eyes from her face. A quick shudder thrilled through her, and her voice faltered. Up hurried Mme. de Sérizy from her place.

"What is it, dear? Oh! poor little thing! she is in such weak health; I was so afraid when I saw her begin a piece so far beyond her strength."

The song was interrupted. Julie was vexed. She had not courage to sing any longer, and submitted to her rival's treacherous sympathy. There was a whisper among the women. The incident led to discussions; they guessed that the struggle had begun between the marquise and Mme. de Sérizy, and their tongues did not spare the latter.

Julie's strange, perturbing presentiments were suddenly realized. Through her preoccupation with Arthur she had loved to imagine that with that gentle, refined face he must remain faithful to his first-love. There were times when she felt proud that this ideal, pure, and passionate young love should have been hers; the passion of the young lover whose thoughts are all for her to whom he dedicates every moment of his life, who blushes as a woman blushes, thinks as a woman might think, forgetting ambition, fame, and fortune in devotion to his love—she need never fear a rival. All these things she had fondly and idly dreamed of Arthur; now all at once it seemed to her that her dream had come true. In the young Englishman's half-feminine face she read the same deep thoughts, the same pensive melancholy, the same passive acquiescence in a painful lot, and an endurance like her own. She saw herself in him. Trouble and sadness are the most eloquent of love's interpreters, and response is marvelously

swift between two suffering creatures, for in them the powers of intuition and of assimilation of facts and ideas are well-nigh unerring and perfect. So with the violence of the shock the marquise's eyes were opened to the whole extent of the future danger. She was only too glad to find a pretext for her nervousness in her chronic ill-health, and willingly submitted to be overwhelmed by Mme. de Sérizy's insidious compassion.

That incident of the song caused talk and discussion which differed with the various groups. Some pitied Julie's fate, and regretted that such a remarkable woman was lost to society; others fell to wondering what the cause of her ill-health and seclusion could be.

"Well, now, my dear Ronquerolles," said the marquis, addressing Mme. de Sérizy's brother, "you used to envy me my good-fortune, and you used to blame me for my infidelities. Pshaw, you would not find much to envy in my lot if, like me, you had a pretty wife so fragile that for the past two years you might not so much as kiss her hand for fear of damaging her. Do not you encumber yourself with one of these fragile ornaments, only fit to put in a glass case, so brittle and so costly that you are always obliged to be careful of them. They tell me that you are afraid of snow or wet for that fine horse of yours; how often do you ride him? That is just my own case. It is true that my wife gives me no ground for jealousy, but my marriage is a purely ornamental business; if you think that I am a married man, you are grossly mistaken. So there is some excuse for my unfaithfulness. I should dearly like to know what you gentlemen who laugh at me would do in my place. Not many men would be so considerate as I am. I am sure" (here he lowered his voice) "that Mme. d'Aiglemont suspects nothing. And then, of course, I have no right to complain at all; I am very well off. Only there is nothing more trying for a man who feels things

than the sight of suffering in a poor creature to whom you are attached——"

"You must have a very sensitive nature, then," said M. de Ronquerolles, "for you are not often at home."

Laughter followed on the friendly epigram; but Arthur, who made one of the group, maintained a frigid imperturbability in his quality of an English gentleman who takes gravity for the very basis of his being. D'Aiglemont's eccentric confidence, no doubt, had kindled some kind of hope in Arthur, for he stood patiently awaiting an opportunity of a word with the marquis. He had not long to wait.

"My lord marquis," he said, "I am unspeakably pained to see the state of Madame d'Aiglemont's health. I do not think that you would talk jestingly about it if you knew that unless she adopts a certain course of treatment she must die miserably. If I use this language to you, it is because I am in a manner justified in using it, for I am quite certain that I can save Madame d'Aiglemont's life and restore her to health and happiness. It is odd, no doubt, that a man of my rank should be a physician, yet nevertheless chance determined that I should study medicine. I find life dull enough here," he continued, affecting a cold selfishness to gain his ends; "it makes no difference to me whether I spend my time and travel for the benefit of a suffering fellow-creature or waste it in Paris on some nonsense or other. It is very, very seldom that a cure is completed in these complaints, for they require constant care, time, and patience, and, above all things, money. Travel is needed, and a punctilious following out of prescriptions, by no means unpleasant, and varied daily. Two *gentlemen*" (laying a stress on the word in its English sense) "can understand each other. I give you warning that, if you accept my proposal, you shall be a judge of my conduct at every moment. I will do nothing without consulting you, without your superintendence, and I will answer for the success of my method if you will consent to follow it. Yes,

unless you wish to be Madame d'Aiglemont's husband no longer, and that before long," he added in the marquis' ear.

The marquis laughed. "One thing is certain—that only an Englishman could make me such an extraordinary proposal," he said. "Permit me to leave it unaccepted and unrejected. I will think it over; and my wife must be consulted first in any case."

Julie had returned to the piano. This time she sang a song from "Semiramide: Son regina, son guerriera,"* and the whole room applauded, a stifled outburst of well-bred acclamation which proved that the Faubourg Saint-Germain had been roused to enthusiasm by her singing.

The evening was over. D'Aiglemont brought his wife home, and Julie saw with uneasy satisfaction that her first attempt had been at once successful. Her husband had been roused out of indifference by the part which she had played, and now he meant to honor her with such a passing fancy as he might bestow upon some opera nymph. It amused Julie that she, a virtuous married woman, should be treated thus. She tried to play with her power, but at the outset her kindness broke down once more, and she received the most terrible of all the lessons held in store for her by fate.

Between two and three o'clock in the morning Julie sat up, sombre and moody, beside her sleeping husband, in the room dimly lighted by the flickering lamp. Deep silence prevailed. Her agony of remorse had lasted near an hour; how bitter her tears had been none perhaps can realize save women who have known such an experience as hers. Only such natures as Julie's can feel her loathing for a calculated caress, the horror of a loveless kiss, of the heart's apostasy, followed by dolorous prostitution. She despised herself; she cursed marriage. She could have longed for death; perhaps if it had not been for a cry from her child, she would have sprung from the window and dashed herself upon the pavement. M. d'Aigle-

* His queen, his warrior.

mont slept on peacefully at her side; his wife's hot dropping tears did not waken him.

But next morning Julie could be gay. She made a great effort to look happy, to hide, not her melancholy as heretofore, but an insuperable loathing. From that day she no longer regarded herself as a blameless wife. Had she not been false to herself? Why should she not play a double part in the future, and display astounding depths of cunning in deceiving her husband? In her there lay a hitherto undiscovered latent depravity, lacking only opportunity, and her marriage was the cause.

Even now she had asked herself why she should struggle with love, when, with her heart and her whole nature in revolt, she gave herself to the husband whom she loved no longer. Perhaps, who knows? some piece of fallacious reasoning, some bit of special pleading, lies at the root of all sins, of all crimes. How shall society exist unless every individual of which it is composed will make the necessary sacrifices of inclination demanded by its laws? If you accept the benefits of civilized society, do you not by implication engage to observe the conditions, the conditions of its very existence? And yet, starving wretches, compelled to respect the laws of property, are not less to be pitied than women whose natural instincts and sensitiveness are turned to so many avenues of pain.

A few days after that scene of which the secret lay buried in the midnight couch, d'Aiglemont introduced Lord Grenville. Julie gave the guest a stiffly polite reception, which did credit to her powers of dissimulation. Resolutely she silenced her heart, veiled her eyes, steadied her voice, and so kept her future in her own hands. Then, when by these devices, this innate womancraft, as it may be called, she had discovered the full extent of the love which she inspired, Mme. d'Aiglemont welcomed the hope of a speedy cure, and no longer opposed her husband, who pressed her to accept the young

doctor's offer. Yet she declined to trust herself with Lord Grenville until, after some further study of his words and manner, she could feel certain that he had sufficient generosity to endure his pain in silence. She had absolute power over him, and she had begun to abuse that power already. Was she not a woman?

Montcontour is an old manor-house built upon the sandy cliffs above the Loire, not far from the bridge where Julie's journey was interrupted in 1814. It is a picturesque, white hall, with turrets covered with fine stone carving like Mechlin lace; a mansion such as you often see in Touraine, spick and span, ivy-clad, standing among its groves of mulberry-trees and vineyards, with its hollow walks, its stone balustrades, and cellars mined in the rock escarpments mirrored in the Loire. The roofs of Montcontour gleam in the sun; the whole land glows in the burning heat. Traces of the romantic charm of Spain and the south hover about the enchanting spot. The breeze brings the scent of bell-flowers and golden-broom, the air is soft; all about you lies a sunny land, a land which casts its dreamy spell over your soul, a land of languor and of soft desire, a fair, sweet-scented country, where pain is lulled to sleep and passion wakes. No heart is cold for long beneath its clear sky, beside its sparkling waters. One ambition dies after another, and you sink into a serene content and repose, as the sun sinks at the end of the day swathed about with purple and azure.

One warm August evening in 1821 two people were climbing the paths cut in the crags above the hall, doubtless for the sake of the view from the heights above. The two were Julie and Lord Grenville, but this Julie seemed to be a new creature. The unmistakable color of health glowed in her face. Overflowing vitality had brought a light into her eyes, which sparkled through a moist film with that liquid brightness

which gives such irresistible charm to the eyes of children. She was radiant with smiles; she felt the joy of living and all the possibilities of life. From the very way in which she lifted her little feet, it was easy to see that no suffering trammeled her lightest movements; there was no heaviness nor languor in her eyes, her voice, as heretofore. Under the white silk sunshade which screened her from the hot sunlight, she looked like some young bride beneath her veil, or a maiden waiting to yield to the magical enchantments of Love.

Arthur led her with a lover's care, helping her up the pathway as if she had been a child, finding the smoothest ways, avoiding the stones for her, bidding her see glimpses of distance, or some flower beside the path, always with the unfailing goodness, the same delicate design in all that he did, the intuitive sense of this woman's well-being seemed to be innate in him, and as much, nay, perhaps more, a part of his being as the pulse of his own life.

The patient and her doctor went step for step. There was nothing strange for them in a sympathy which seemed to have existed since the day when first they walked together. One will swayed them both; they stopped as their senses received the same impression; every word and every glance told of the same thought in either mind. They had climbed up through the vineyards, and now they turned to sit on one of the long white stones, quarried out of the caves in the hillside; but Julie stood awhile gazing out over the landscape.

"What a beautiful country!" she cried. "Let us put up a tent and live here. Victor, Victor, do come up here!"

M. d'Aiglemont answered by a halloo from below. He did not, however, hurry himself, merely giving his wife a glance from time to time when the windings of the path gave him a glimpse of her. Julie breathed the air with delight. She looked up at Arthur, giving him one of those subtle glances in which a clever woman can put the whole of her thought.

"Ah, I should like to live here always," she said. "Would it be possible to tire of this beautiful valley? What is the picturesque river called, do you know?"

"That is the Cise."

"The Cise," she repeated. "And all this country below, before us?"

"Those are the low hills above the Cher."*

"And away to the right? Ah, that is Tours. Only see how fine the cathedral towers look in the distance."

She was silent, and let fall the hand which she had stretched out toward the view upon Arthur's. Both admired the wide landscape made up of so much blended beauty. Neither of them spoke. The murmuring voice of the river, the pure air, and the cloudless heaven were all in tune with their thronging thoughts and their youth and the love in their hearts.

"Oh! my God, how I love this country!" Julie continued, with growing and ingenuous enthusiasm. "You lived here for a long while, did you not?" she added after a pause.

A thrill ran through Lord Grenville at her words.

"It was down there," he said, in a melancholy voice, indicating as he spoke a cluster of walnut-trees by the roadside, "that I, a prisoner, saw you for the first time."

"Yes, but even at that time I felt very sad. This country looked wild to me then, but now——" She broke off, and Lord Grenville did not dare to look at her.

"All this pleasure I owe to you," Julie began at last, after a long silence. "Only the living can feel the joy of life, and until now have I not been dead to it all? You have given me more than health, you have made me feel all its worth——"

Women have an inimitable talent for giving utterance to strong feeling in colorless words; a woman's eloquence lies in tone and gesture, manner and glance. Lord Grenville hid

* A tributary of the Loire.

his face in his hands, for the tears filled his eyes. This was Julie's first word of thanks since they left Paris a year ago.

For a whole year he had watched over the marquise, putting his whole self into the task. D'Aiglemont seconding him, he had taken her first to Aix, then to La Rochelle, to be near the sea. From moment to moment he had watched the changes worked in Julie's shattered constitution by his wise and simple prescriptions. He had cultivated her health as an enthusiastic gardener might cultivate a rare flower. Yet, to all appearance, the marquise had quietly accepted Arthur's skill and care with the egoism of a spoiled Parisienne, or like a courtesan who has no idea of the cost of things, nor of the worth of a man, and judges of both by their comparative usefulness to her.

The influence of places upon us is a fact worth remarking. If melancholy comes over us by the margin of a great water, another indelible law of our nature so orders it that the mountains exercise a purifying influence upon our feelings, and among the hills passion gains in depth by all that it apparently loses in vivacity. Perhaps it was the sight of the wide country by the Loire, the height of the fair sloping hillside on which the lovers sat, that induced the calm bliss of the moment when the whole extent of the passion that lies beneath a few insignificant-sounding words is divined for the first time with a delicious sense of happiness.

Julie had scarcely spoken the words which had moved Lord Grenville so deeply, when a caressing breeze ruffled the tree-tops and filled the air with coolness from the river; a few clouds crossed the sky, and the soft cloud-shadows brought out all the beauty of the fair land below.

Julie turned away her head, lest Arthur should see the tears which she succeeded in repressing; his emotion had spread at once to her. She dried her eyes, but she dared not raise them lest he should read the excess of joy in a glance. Her woman's instinct told her that during this hour of danger she

must hide her love in the depths of her heart. Yet silence might prove equally dangerous, and Julie saw that Lord Grenville was unable to utter a word. She went on, therefore, in a gentle voice—

"You are touched by what I have said. Perhaps such a quick outburst of feeling is the way in which a gracious and kind nature like yours reverses a mistaken judgment. You must have thought me ungrateful when I was cold and reserved, or cynical and hard, all through the journey which, fortunately, is very near its end. I should not have been worthy of your care if I had been unable to appreciate it. I have forgotten nothing. Alas! I shall forget nothing, not the anxious way in which you watched over me as a mother watches over her child, nor, and above all else, the noble confidence of our life as brother and sister, the delicacy of your conduct—winning charms, against which we women are defenseless. My lord, it is out of my power to make you a return——"

At those words Julie hastily moved farther away, and Lord Grenville made no attempt to detain her. She went to a rock not far away, and there sat motionless. What either felt remained a secret known to each alone; doubtless they wept in silence. The singing of the birds about them, so blithe, so overflowing with tenderness at sunset time, could only increase the storm of passion which had driven them apart. Nature took up their story for them, and found a language for the love of which they did not dare to speak.

"And now, my lord," said Julie, and she came and stood before Arthur with a great dignity, which allowed her to take his hand in hers. "I am going to ask you to hallow and purify the life which you have given back to me. Here, we will part. I know," she added, as she saw how white his face grew, "I know that I am repaying you for your devotion by requiring of you a sacrifice even greater than any which you have hitherto made for me, sacrifices so great that they should

receive some better recompense than this. But it must be. You must not stay in France. By laying this command upon you, do I not give you rights which shall be held sacred?" she added, holding his hand against her beating heart.

"Yes," said Arthur, and he arose.

He looked in the direction of d'Aiglemont, who appeared on the opposite side of one of the hollow walks with the child in his arms. He had scrambled up on the balustrade by the manor-house that little Helene might jump down.

"Julie, I will say not a word of my love; we understand each other too well. Deeply and carefully though I have hidden the pleasures of my heart, you have shared them all. I feel it, I know it, I see it. And now, at this moment, as I receive this delicious proof of the constant sympathy of our hearts, I must go. Cunning schemes for getting rid of him have crossed my mind too often; the temptation might be irresistible if I stayed with you."

"I had the same thought," she said, a look of pained surprise in her troubled face.

Yet in her tone and involuntary shudder there was such virtue, such certainty of herself, won in many a hard-fought battle with a love that spoke in Julie's tones and involuntary gestures, that Lord Grenville stood thrilled with admiration of her. The mere shadow of a crime had been dispelled from that clear conscience. The religious sentiment enthroned on the fair forehead could not but drive away the evil thoughts that arise unbidden, engendered by our imperfect nature, thoughts which make us aware of the grandeur and the perils of human destiny.

"And then," she said, "I should have drawn down your scorn upon me, and—— I should have been saved," she added, and her eyes fell. "To be lowered in your eyes, what is that but death?"

For a moment the two heroic lovers were silent, choking down their sorrow. Good or ill, it seemed that their thoughts

were loyally one, and the joys in the depths of their hearts were no more experiences apart than the pain which they strove most anxiously to hide.

"I have no right to complain," she said after a while, "my misery is of my own making," and she raised her tear-filled eyes to the sky.

"Perhaps you don't remember it, but that is the place where we met each other for the first time," shouted the general from below, and he waved his hand toward the distance. "There, down yonder, near those poplars!"

The Englishman nodded abruptly by way of answer.

"So I was bound to die young and to know no happiness," Julie continued. "Yes, do not think that I live. Sorrow is just as fatal as the dreadful disease which you have cured. I do not think that I am to blame. No. My love is stronger than I am, and eternal; but all unconsciously it grew in me; and I will not be guilty through my love. Nevertheless, though I shall be faithful to my conscience as a wife, to my duties as a mother, I will be no less faithful to the instincts of my heart. Hear me," she cried in an unsteady voice, "henceforth I belong to *him* no longer."

By a gesture, dreadful to see in its undisguised loathing, she indicated her husband.

"The social code demands that I should make his existence happy," she continued. "I will obey, I will be his servant, my devotion to him shall be boundless; but from to-day I am a widow. I will neither be a prostitute in my own eyes nor in those of the world. If I do not belong to Monsieur d'Aiglemont, I will never belong to another. You shall have nothing, nothing save this which you have wrung from me. This is the doom which I have passed upon myself," she said, looking proudly at him. "And now, know this—if you give way to a single criminal thought, Monsieur d'Aiglemont's widow will enter a convent in Spain or Italy. By an evil chance we have spoken of our love; perhaps that confession was bound to

come; but our hearts must never again vibrate like this. To-morrow you will receive a letter from England, and we shall part and never see each other again."

The effort had exhausted all Julie's strength. She felt her knees trembling, and a feeling of deathly cold came over her. Obeying a woman's instinct, she sat down, lest she should sink into Arthur's arms.

"*Julie!*" cried Lord Grenville.

The sharp cry rang through the air like a crack of thunder. Till then he could not speak; now, all the words which the dumb lover could not utter gathered themselves in that heart-rending appeal.

"Well, what is wrong with her?" asked the general, who had hurried up at that cry, and now suddenly confronted the two.

"Nothing serious," said Julie, with that wonderful self-possession which a woman's quick-wittedness usually brings to her aid when it is most called for. "The chill, damp air under the walnut-tree made me feel quite faint just now, and that must have alarmed this doctor of mine. Does he not look on me as a very nearly finished work of art? He was startled, I suppose, by the idea of seeing it destroyed." With ostentatious coolness she took Lord Grenville's arm, smiled at her husband, took a last look at the landscape, and went down the pathway, drawing her traveling companion along with her.

"This certainly is the grandest view that we have seen," she said; "I shall never forget it. Just look, Victor, what distance, what an expanse of country, and what variety in it! I have fallen in love with this landscape."

Her laughter was almost hysterical, but to her husband it sounded natural. She sprang gayly down into the hollow pathway and vanished.

"What?" she cried, when they had left M. d'Aiglemont far behind. "So soon? Is it so soon? Another moment,

and we can neither of us be ourselves; we shall never be ourselves again, our life is over, in short——"

"Let us go slowly," said Lord Grenville, "the carriages are still some way off, and if we may put words into our glances, our hearts may live a little longer."

They went along the footpath by the river in the late evening light, almost in silence; such vague words as they uttered, low as the murmur of the Loire, stirred their souls to the depths. Just as the sun sank, a last red gleam from the sky fell over them; it was like a mournful symbol of their ill-starred love.

The general, much put out because the carriage was not at the spot where they left it, followed and outstripped the pair without interrupting their conversation. Lord Grenville's high-minded and delicate behavior throughout the journey had completely dispelled the marquis' suspicions. For some time past he had left his wife in freedom, reposing confidence in the noble amateur's Punic faith. Arthur and Julie walked on together in the close and painful communion of two hearts laid waste.

So short a while ago as they climbed the cliffs at Montcontour, there had been a vague hope in either mind, an uneasy joy for which they dared not account to themselves; but now as they came along the pathway by the river, they pulled down the frail structure of imaginings, the child's card-castle, on which neither of them had dared to breathe. That hope was over.

That very evening Lord Grenville left them. His last look at Julie made it miserably plain that since the moment when sympathy revealed the full extent of a tyrannous passion, he did well to mistrust himself.

The next morning M. d'Aiglemont and his wife took their places in their carriage without their traveling companion, and were whirled swiftly along the road to Blois. The marquise was constantly put in mind of the journey made in 1814,

when as yet she knew nothing of love, and had been almost ready to curse it for its persistency. Countless forgotten impressions were revived. The heart has its own memory. A woman who cannot recollect the most important great events will recollect through a lifetime things which appealed to her feelings; and Julie d'Aiglemont found all the most trifling details of that journey laid up in her mind. It was pleasant to her to recall its little incidents as they occurred to her one by one; there were points in the road when she could even remember the thoughts that passed through her mind when she saw them first.

Victor had fallen violently in love with his wife since she had recovered the freshness of her youth and all her beauty, and now he pressed close to her side like a lover. Once he tried to put his arm round her, but she gently disengaged herself, finding some excuse or other for evading the harmless caress. In a little while she shrank from the close contact with Victor, the sensation of warmth communicated by their position. She tried to take the unoccupied place opposite, but Victor gallantly resigned the back seat to her. For this attention she thanked him with a sigh, whereupon he forgot himself, and the Don Juan of the garrison construed his wife's melancholy to his own advantage, so that at the end of the day she was compelled to speak with a firmness which impressed him.

"You have all but killed me, dear, once already, as you know," said she. "If I were still an inexperienced girl, I might begin to sacrifice myself afresh; but I am a mother, I have a daughter to bring up, and I owe as much to her as to you. Let us resign ourselves to a misfortune which affects us both alike. You are the less to be pitied. Have you not, as it is, found consolations which duty and the honor of both, and (stronger still) which Nature forbids to me? Stay," she added, "you carelessly left three letters from Madame de Sérizy in a drawer; here they are. My silence about this

matter should make it plain to you that in me you have a wife who has plenty of indulgence and does not exact from you the sacrifices prescribed by the law. But I have thought enough to see that the roles of husband and wife are quite different, and that the wife alone is predestined to misfortune. My virtue is based upon firmly fixed and definite principles. I shall live blamelessly, but let me live."

The marquis was taken aback by a logic which women grasp with the clear insight of love, and overawed by a certain dignity natural to them at such crises. Julie's instinctive repugnance for all that jarred upon her love and the instincts of her heart is one of the fairest qualities of woman, and springs perhaps from a natural virtue which neither laws nor civilization can silence. And who shall dare to blame women? If a woman can silence the exclusive sentiment which bids her "forsake all other" for the man whom she loves, what is she but a priest who has lost his faith? If a rigid mind here and there condemns Julie for a sort of compromise between love and wifely duty, impassioned souls will lay it to her charge as a crime. To be thus blamed by both sides shows one ot two things very clearly—that misery necessarily follows in the train of broken laws, or else that there are deplorable flaws in the institutions upon which society in Europe is based.

Two years went by. M. and Mme. d'Aiglemont went their separate ways, leading their life in the world, meeting each other more frequently abroad than at home, a refinement upon divorce, in which many a marriage in the great world is apt to end.

One evening, strange to say, found husband and wife in their own drawing-room. Mme. d'Aiglemont had been dining at home with a friend, and the general, who almost invariably dined in town, had not gone out for once.

"There is a pleasant time in store for you, *Madame la Marquise*," said M. d'Aiglemont, setting his coffee cup down upon

the table. He looked at the guest, Mme. de Wimphen, and half-pettishly, half-mischievously added, "I am starting off for several days' sport with the master of the hounds. For a whole week, at any rate, you will be a widow in good earnest; just what you wish for, I suppose. Guillaume," he said to the servant who entered, "tell them to put the horses in."

Mme. de Wimphen was the friend to whom Julie had begun the letter upon her marriage. The glances exchanged by the two women said plainly that in her Julie had found an intimate friend, an indulgent and invaluable confidant. Mme. de Wimphen's marriage had been a very happy one. Perhaps it was her own happiness which secured her devotion to Julie's unhappy life, for, under such circumstances, dissimilarity of destiny is nearly always a strong bond of union.

"Is the hunting season not over yet?" asked Julie, with an indifferent glance at her husband.

"The master of the hounds comes when and where he pleases, madame. We are going boar-hunting in the Royal Forest."

"Take care that no accident happens to you."

"Accidents are usually unforeseen," he said, smiling.

"The carriage is ready, my lord marquis," said the servant.

"Madame, if I should fall a victim to the boar——" he continued, with a suppliant air.

"What does this mean?" inquired Mme. de Wimphen.

"Come, come," said Mme. d'Aiglemont, turning to her husband; smiling at her friend as if to say, "You will soon see."

Julie held up her head; but as her husband came close to her, she swerved at the last, so that his kiss fell not on her throat, but on the broad frill about it.

"You will be my witness before heaven now that I need a firman to obtain this little grace of her," said the marquis, addressing Mme. de Wimphen. "This is how this wife of

mine understands love. She has brought me to this pass, by what trickery I am at a loss to know—— A pleasant time to you!" and he went.

"But your poor husband is really very good-natured," cried Louisa de Wimphen, when the two women were alone together. He loves you."

"Oh! not another syllable after that last word. The name I bear makes me shudder——"

"Yes, but Victor obeys you implicitly," said Louisa.

"His obedience is founded in part upon the great esteem which I have inspired in him. As far as outward things go, I am a model wife. I make his house pleasant to him; I shut my eyes to his intrigues; I touch not a penny of his fortune. He is free to squander the interest exactly as he pleases; I only stipulate that he shall not touch the principal. At this price I have peace. He neither explains nor attempts to explain my life. But though my husband is guided by me, that does not say that I have nothing to fear from his character. I am a bear-leader who daily trembles lest the muzzle should give way at last. If Victor once took it into his head that I had forfeited my right to his esteem, what would happen next I dare not think; for he is violent, full of personal pride, and vain above all things. While his wits are not keen enough to enable him to behave discreetly at a delicate crisis when his lowest passions are involved, his character is weak, and he would very likely kill me provisionally even if he died of remorse next day. But there is no fear of that fatal good-fortune."

A brief pause followed. Both women were thinking of the real cause of this state of affairs. Julie gave Louisa a glance which revealed her thoughts.

"I have been cruelly obeyed," she cried. "Yet I never forbade him to write me. Oh! he, *he* has forgotten me, and he is right. If his life had been spoiled, it would have been too tragical; one life is enough, is it not? Would you be-

lieve it, dear; I read English newspapers simply to see his name in print. But he has not yet taken his seat in the House of Lords."

"So you know English?"

"Did I not tell you? Yes, I learned."

"Poor little one!" cried Louisa, grasping Julie's hand in hers. "How can you still live?"

"That is a secret," said the marquise, with an involuntary gesture almost childlike in its simplicity. "Listen, I take laudanum. That duchess in London suggested the idea; you know the story, Maturin made use of it in one of his novels. My drops are very weak, but I sleep; I am only awake for seven hours in the day, and those hours I spend with my child."

Louisa gazed into the fire. The full extent of her friend's misery was opening out before her for the first time and she dared not look into her face.

"Keep my secret, Louisa," said Julie, after a moment's silence.

Just as she spoke the footman brought in a letter for the marquise.

"Ah!" she cried, and her face grew white.

"I need not ask from whom it comes," said Mme. de Wimphen, but the marquise was reading the letter, and heeded nothing else.

Mme. de Wimphen, watching her friend, saw strong feeling wrought to the highest pitch, ecstasy of the most dangerous kind painted on Julie's face in swift-changing white and red. At length Julie flung the sheet into the fire.

"It burns like fire," she said. "Oh! my heart beats till I cannot breathe."

She rose to her feet and walked up and down. Her eyes were blazing.

"He did not leave Paris!" she cried.

Mme. de Wimphen did not dare to interrupt the words

that followed, jerked-out sentences, measured by dreadful pauses in between. After every break the deep notes of her voice sank lower and lower. There was something awful about the last words.

"He has seen me, constantly, and I have not known it.—A look, taken by stealth, every day, helps him to live.—Louisa, you do not know!—He is dying.—He wants to say good-by to me. He knows that my husband has gone away for several days. He will be here in a moment. Oh! I shall die: I am lost.—Listen, Louisa, stay with me! Two women and he will not dare—— Oh! stay with me!—*I am afraid!*"

"But my husband knows that I have been dining with you; he is sure to come for me," said Mme. de Wimphen.

"Well, then, before you go I will send *him* away. I will play the executioner for us both. Oh me! he will think that I do not love him any more—— And that letter of his! Dear, I can see those words in letters of fire."

A carriage rolled in under the archway.

"Ah!" cried the marquise, with something like joy in her voice, "he is coming openly. He makes no mystery of it."

"Lord Grenville," announced the servant.

The marquise stood up rigid and motionless; but at the sight of Arthur's white face, so thin and haggard, how was it possible to keep up the show of severity? Lord Grenville saw that Julie was not alone, but he controlled his fierce annoyance, and looked cool and unperturbed. Yet for the two women who knew his secret, his face, his tones, the look in his eyes had something of the power attributed to the torpedo. Their faculties were benumbed by the sharp shock of contact with his horrible pain. The sound of his voice set Julie's heart beating so cruelly that she could not trust herself to speak; she was afraid that he would see the full extent of his power over her. Lord Grenville did not dare to look at Julie, and Mme. de Wimphen was left to sustain a conversa-

tion to which no one listened. Julie glanced at her friend with touching gratefulness in her eyes to thank her for coming to her aid.

By this time the lovers had quelled emotion into silence, and could preserve the limits laid down by duty and convention. But M. de Wimphen was announced, and as he came in the two friends exchanged glances. Both felt the difficulties of this fresh complication. It was impossible to enter into explanations with M. de Wimphen, and Louisa could not think of any sufficient pretext for asking to be left.

Julie went to her, ostensibly to wrap her up in her shawl. "I will be brave," she said, in a low voice. "He came here in face of all the world, so what I have to fear? Yet, but for you, in that first moment, when I saw how changed he looked, I should have fallen at his feet."

"Well, Arthur, you have broken your promise to me," she said, in a faltering voice, when she returned. Lord Grenville did not venture to take the seat upon the sofa by her side.

"I could not resist the pleasure of hearing your voice, of being near you. The thought of it came to be a sort of madness, a delirious frenzy. I am no longer master of myself. I have taken myself to task; it is no use, I am too weak, I ought to die. But to die without seeing you, without having heard the rustle of your dress, or felt your tears. What a death!"

He moved farther away from her; but in his hasty uprising a pistol fell out of his pocket. The marquise looked down blankly at the weapon; all passion, all expression had died out of his eyes. Lord Grenville stooped for the thing, raging inwardly over an accident which seemed like a piece of love-sick strategy.

"*Arthur!*"

"Madame," he said, looking down, "I came here in utter desperation; I meant——" he broke off.

"You meant to die by your own hand here in my house!"

"Not alone," he said in a low voice.

"Not alone! My husband, perhaps——?"

"No, no," he cried in a choking voice. "Reassure yourself," he continued, "I have quite given up my deadly purpose. As soon as I came in, as soon as I saw you, I felt that I was strong enough to suffer in silence, and to die alone."

Julie sprang up, and flung herself into his arms. Through her sobbing he caught a few passionate words, "To know happiness, and then to die. Yes, let it be so."

All Julie's story was summed up in that cry from the depths; it was the summons of nature and of love at which women without a religion surrender. With the fierce energy of unhoped-for joy, Arthur caught her up and carried her to the sofa; but in a moment she tore herself from her lover's arms, looked at him with a fixed despairing gaze, took his hand, snatched up a candle, and drew him into her room. When they stood by the cot where Helene lay sleeping, she put the curtains softly aside, shading the candle with her hand, lest the light should dazzle the half-closed eyes beneath the transparent lids. Helene lay smiling in her sleep, with her arms outstretched on the coverlet. Julie glanced from her child to Arthur's face. That look told him all.

"We may leave a husband, even though he loves us: a man is strong; he has consolations. We may defy the world and its laws. But a motherless child!"—all these thoughts, and a thousand others more moving still, found language in that glance.

"We can take her with us," muttered he; "I will love her dearly."

"Mamma!" cried little Helene, now awake. Julie burst into tears. Lord Grenville sat down and folded his arms in gloomy silence.

"Mamma!" At the sweet childish name, so many nobler feelings, so many irresistible yearnings awoke, that for a moment love was effaced by the all-powerful instinct of mother-

SHE PUT THE CURTAINS SOFTLY ASIDE

hood; the mother triumphed over the woman in Julie, and Lord Grenville could not hold out, he was defeated by Julie's tears.

Just at that moment a door was flung noisily open. "Madame d'Aiglemont, are you hereabout?" called a voice which rang like a crack of thunder through the hearts of the two lovers. The marquis had come home.

Before Julie could recover her presence of mind, her husband was on the way to the door of her room which opened into his. Luckily, at a sign, Lord Grenville escaped into the dressing-closet, and she hastily shut the door upon him.

"Well, my lady, here am I," said Victor, "the hunting party did not come off. I am just going to bed."

"Good-night, so am I. So go and leave me to undress."

"You are very cross to-night, Madame la Marquise."

The general returned to his room, Julie went with him to the door and shut it. Then she sprang to the dressing-closet to release Arthur. All her presence of mind returned; she bethought herself that it was quite natural that her sometime doctor should pay her a visit; she might have left him in the drawing-room while she put her little girl to bed. She was about to tell him, under her breath, to go back to the drawing-room, and had opened the door. Then she shrieked aloud. Lord Grenville's fingers had been caught and crushed in the door.

"Well, what is it?" demanded her husband.

"Oh! nothing, nothing, I have just pricked my finger with a pin."

The general's door opened at once. Julie imagined that the irruption was due to a sudden concern for her, and cursed a solicitude in which love had no part. She had barely time to close the dressing-closet, and Lord Grenville had not extricated his hand. The general did, in fact, appear, but his wife had mistaken his motives; his apprehensions were entirely on his own account.

"Can you lend me a bandana handkerchief? That stupid fool Charles leaves me without a single one. In the early days you used to bother me with looking after me so carefully. Ah, well, the honeymoon did not last very long for me, nor yet for my cravats. Nowadays I am given over to the secular arm, in the shape of servants who do not care one jack-straw for what I say."

"There! There is a bandana for you. Did you go into the drawing-room?"

"No."

"Oh! you might perhaps have been in time to see Lord Grenville."

"Is he in Paris?"

"It seems so."

"Oh! I will go at once. The good doctor."

"But he will have gone by now!" exclaimed Julie.

The marquis, standing in the middle of the room, was tying the handkerchief over his head. He looked complacently at himself in the glass.

"What has become of the servants is more than I know," he said. "I rang the bell three times for Charles, and he did not answer it. And your maid is not here either. Ring for her. I should like another blanket on my bed to-night."

"Pauline is out," the marquise said drily.

"What, at midnight?" exclaimed the general.

"I gave her leave to go to the opera."

"That is funny!" returned the husband, continuing to undress. "I thought I saw her coming upstairs."

"She has come in then, of course," said Julie, with assumed impatience, and to allay any possible suspicion on her husband's part she pretended to ring the bell.

The whole history of that night has never been known, but no doubt it was as simple and as tragically commonplace as the domestic incidents that preceded it.

Next day the Marquise d'Aiglemont took to her bed, nor did she leave it for some days.

"What can have happened in your family so extraordinary that every one is talking about your wife?" asked M. de Ronquerolles of M. d'Aiglemont a short time after that night of catastrophes.

"Take my advice and remain a bachelor," said d'Aiglemont. "The curtains of Helene's cot caught fire and gave my wife such a shock that it will be a twelvemonth before she gets over it; so the doctor says. You marry a pretty wife, and her looks fall off; you marry a girl in blooming health, and she turns into an invalid. You think she has a passionate temperament, and find her cold, or else under her apparent coldness there lurks a nature so passionate that she is the death of you, or she dishonors your name. Sometimes the meekest of them will turn out crotchety, though the crotchety ones never grow any sweeter. Sometimes the mere child, so simple and silly at first, will develop an iron will to thwart you and the ingenuity of a fiend. I am tired of marriage."

"Or of your wife?"

"That would be difficult. By-the-by, do you feel inclined to go to Saint-Thomas d'Aquin with me to attend Lord Grenville's funeral?"

"A singular way of spending time. Is it really known how he came by his death?" added Ronquerolles.

"His man says that he spent a whole night sitting on somebody's window-sill to save some woman's character, and it has been infernally cold lately."

"Such devotion would be highly creditable to one of us old stagers; but Lord Grenville was a youngster and—an Englishman. Englishmen never can do anything like anybody else."

"Pooh!" returned d'Aiglemont, "these heroic exploits all depend upon the woman in the case, and it certainly was not for one that I know that poor Arthur came by his death."

II.

A HIDDEN GRIEF.

Between the Seine and the little river Loing lies a wide flat country, skirted on the one side by the Forest of Fontainebleau, and marked out as to its southern limits by the towns of Moret, Montereau, and Nemours. It is a dreary country; little knolls of hills appear only at rare intervals, and a coppice here and there among the fields affords cover for game; and beyond, upon every side, stretches the endless gray or yellowish horizon peculiar to Beauce, Sologne, and Berri.

In the very centre of the plain, at equal distances from Moret and Montereau, the traveler passes the old castle of Saint-Lange, standing amid surroundings which lack neither dignity nor stateliness. There are magnificent avenues of elm-trees, great gardens encircled by the moat, and a circumference of walls about a huge memorial pile which represents the profits of the *maltôte* (illegal taxation), the gains of farmers-general, legalized malversation, or the vast fortunes of great houses now brought low beneath the hammer of the Civil Code.

Should any artist or dreamer of dreams chance to stray along the roads full of deep ruts, or over the heavy land which secures the place against intrusion, he will wonder how it happened that this romantic old place was set down in a savanna of grain-land, a desert of chalk, and sand, and marl, where gayety dies away and melancholy is a natural product of the soil. The voiceless solitude, the monotonous horizon-line which weigh upon the spirits, are negative beauties, which only suit with sorrow that refuses to be comforted.

Hither, at the close of the year 1820, came a woman, still

young, well known in Paris for her charm, her fair face, and her wit; and to the immense astonishment of the little village a mile away, this woman of high rank and corresponding fortune took up her abode at Saint-Lange.

From time immemorial, farmers and laborers had seen no gentry at the mansion. The estate, considerable though it was, had been left in charge of a land-steward and the house to the old servants. Wherefore the appearance of the lady of the manor caused a kind of sensation in the district.

A group had gathered in the yard of the wretched little wineshop at the end of the village (where the road forks to Nemours and Moret) to see the carriage pass. It went by slowly, for the marquise had come from Paris with her own horses, and those on the lookout had ample opportunity of observing a waiting-maid, who sat with her back to the horses holding a little girl, with a somewhat dreamy look, upon her knee. The child's mother lay back in the carriage; she looked like a dying woman sent out into country air by her doctors as a last resource. Village politicians were by no means pleased to see the young, delicate, downcast face; they had hoped that the new arrival at Saint-Lange would bring some life and stir into the neighborhood, and clearly any sort of stir or movement must be distasteful to the suffering invalid in the traveling carriage.

That evening, when the notables of Saint-Lange were drinking in the private room of the wineshop, the longest head among them declared that such depression could admit of but one construction—the marquise was ruined. His lordship the marquis was away in Spain with the Duc d'Angoulême (so they said in the papers), and beyond a doubt her ladyship had come to Saint-Lange to retrench after a run of ill-luck on the Bourse. The marquis was one of the greatest gamblers on the face of the globe. Perhaps the estate would be cut up and sold in little lots. There would be some good strokes of business to be made in that case, and it behooved everybody

to count up his cash, unearth his savings, and to see how he stood, so as to secure his share of the spoil of Saint-Lange.

So fair did this future seem that the village worthies, dying to know whether it was founded on fact, began to think of ways of getting at the truth through the servants at the manor-house. None of these, however, could throw any light on the calamity which had brought their mistress into the country at the beginning of winter, and to the old castle of Saint-Lange of all places, when she might have taken her choice of cheerful country-houses famous for their beautiful gardens.

His worship the mayor called to pay his respects; but he did not see the lady. Then the land-steward tried with no better success.

Madame la Marquise kept her room, only leaving it, while it was set in order, for the small adjoining drawing-room, where she dined; if, indeed, to sit down to a table, to look with disgust at the dishes, and taking the precise amount of nourishment required to prevent death from sheer starvation, can be called dining. The meal over, she returned at once to the old-fashioned low chair, in which she had sat since the morning, in the embrasure of the one window that lighted her room.

Her little girl she only saw for a few minutes daily, during the dismal dinner, and even for that short time she seemed scarcely able to bear the child's presence. Surely nothing but the most unheard-of anguish could have extinguished a mother's love so early.

None of the servants were suffered to come near, her own woman was the one creature whom she liked to have about her; the castle must be perfectly quiet, the child must play at the other end of the house. The slightest sound had grown so intolerable that any human voice, even the voice of her own child, jarred upon her.

At first the whole countryside was deeply interested in these eccentricities; but time passed on, every possible hypothesis

had been advanced to account for them, and the peasants and dwellers in the little country towns thought no more of the invalid lady.

So the marquise was left to herself. She might live on, perfectly silent, amid the silence which she herself had created; there was nothing to draw her forth from the tapestried chamber where her grandmother had died, whither she herself had come that she might die, gently, without witnesses, without importunate solicitude, without suffering from the insincere demonstrations of egoism masquerading as affection, which double the agony of death in great cities.

She was twenty-six years old. At that age, with plenty of romantic illusions still left, the mind loves to dwell on the thought of death when death seems to come as a friend. But with youth, death is coy, coming up close only to go away, showing himself and hiding again, till youth has time to fall out of love with him during this dalliance. There is that uncertainty, too, that hangs over death's to-morrow. Youth plunges back into the world of living men, there to find the pain more pitiless than death, that does not wait to strike.

This woman who refused to live was to know the bitterness of these reprieves in the depths of her loneliness; in moral agony, which death would not come to end, she was to serve a terrible apprenticeship to the egoism which must take the bloom from her heart and break her in to the life of the world.

This harsh and sorry teaching is the usual outcome of our early sorrows. For the first, and perhaps for the last time in her life, the Marquise d'Aiglemont was in very truth suffering. And, indeed, would it not be an error to suppose that the same sentiment can be reproduced in us? Once develop the power to feel, is it not always there in the depths of our nature? The accidents of life may lull or awaken it, but there it is, of necessity modifying the self, its abiding-place. Hence, every sensation should have its great day once and for all, its

first day of storm, be it long or short. Hence, likewise, pain, the most abiding of our sensations, could be keenly felt only at its first irruption, its intensity diminishing with every subsequent paroxysm, either because we grow accustomed to these crises, or perhaps because a natural instinct of self-preservation asserts itself and opposes to the destroying force of anguish an equal but passive force of inertia.

Yet of all kinds of suffering, to which does the name of anguish belong? For the loss of parents, Nature has in a manner prepared us; physical suffering, again, is an evil which passes over us and is gone; it lays no hold upon the soul; if it persists, it ceases to be an evil, it is death. The young mother loses her firstborn, but wedded love ere long gives her a successor. This grief, too, is transient. After all, these, and many other troubles like unto them, are in some sort wounds and bruises; they do not sap the springs of vitality, and only a succession of such blows can crush in us the instinct that seeks happiness. Great pain, therefore—pain that rises to anguish—should be suffering so deadly that past, present, and future are alike included in its grip and no part of life is left sound and whole. Never afterward can we think the same thoughts as before. Anguish engraves itself in ineffaceable characters on mouth and brow; it passes through us, destroying or relaxing the springs that vibrate to enjoyment, leaving behind in the soul the seeds of a disgust for all things in this world.

Yet, again, to be measureless, to weigh like this upon body and soul, the trouble should befall when soul and body have just come to their full strength, and smite down a heart that beats high with life. Then it is that great scars are made. Terrible is the anguish. None, it may be, can issue from this soul-sickness without undergoing some dramatic change. Those who survive it, those who remain on earth, return to the world to wear an actor's countenance and to play an actor's part. They know the side-scenes whither actors retire

to calculate chances, shed their tears, or pass their jests. Life holds no inscrutable dark-places for those who have passed through this ordeal; their judgments are Rhadamanthine.

For young women of the Marquise d'Aiglemont's age, this first, this most poignant pain of all, is always referable to the same cause. A woman, especially if she is a young woman, greatly beautiful and by nature great, never fails to stake her whole life as instinct and sentiment and society all unite to bid her. Suppose that that life fails her, suppose that she still lives on, she cannot but endure the most cruel pangs, inasmuch as a first-love is the loveliest of all. How comes it that this catastrophe has found no painter, no poet? And yet, can it be painted? Can it be sung? No; for the anguish arising from it eludes analysis and defies the colors of art. And more than this, such pain is never confessed. To console the sufferer, you must be able to divine the past which she hugs in bitterness to her soul like a remorse; it is like an avalanche in a valley, it laid all waste before it found a permanent resting-place.

The marquise was suffering from this anguish, which will for long remain unknown, because the whole world condemns it, while sentiment cherishes it, and the conscience of a true woman justifies her in it. It is with such pain as with children steadily disowned of life, and therefore bound more closely to the mother's heart than other children more bounteously endowed. Never, perhaps, was the awful catastrophe in which the whole world without dies for us, so deadly, so complete, so cruelly aggravated by circumstance as it had been for the marquise. The man whom she had loved was young and generous; in obedience to the laws of the world, she had refused herself to his love, and he had died to save a woman's honor, as the world calls it. To whom could she speak of her misery? Her tears would be an offense to her husband, the origin of the tragedy. By all laws written and

unwritten she was bound over to silence. A woman would have enjoyed the story; a man would have schemed for his own benefit. No; such grief as hers can only weep freely in solitude and in loneliness; she must consume her pain or be consumed by it; die or kill something within her—her conscience, it may be.

Day after day she sat gazing at the flat horizon. It lay out before her like her own life to come. There was nothing to discover, nothing to hope. The whole of it could be seen at a glance. It was the visible presentment in the outward world of the chill sense of desolation which was gnawing restlessly at her heart. The misty mornings, the pale, bright sky, the low clouds scudding under the gray dome of heaven, fitted with the moods of her soul-sickness. Her heart did not contract, was neither more nor less seared, rather it seemed as if her youth, in its full blossom, was slowly turned to stone by an anguish intolerable because it was barren. She suffered through herself and for herself. How could it end save in self-absorption? Ugly torturing thoughts probed her conscience. Candid self-examination pronounced that she was double, there were two selves within her; a woman who felt and a woman who thought; a self that suffered and a self that would fain suffer no longer. Her mind traveled back to the joys of childish days; they had gone by, and she had never known how happy they were. Scenes crowded up in her memory as in a bright mirror-glass, to demonstrate the deception of a marriage which—all that it should be in the eyes of the world—was in reality so wretched. What had the delicate pride of young womanhood done for her—the bliss forgone, the sacrifices made to the world? Everything in her expressed love, awaited love; her movements still were full of perfect grace; her smile, her charm, were hers as before; why? she asked herself. The sense of her own youth and physical loveliness no more affected her than some meaningless reiterated sound. Her very beauty had grown intolerable

to her as a useless thing. She shrank aghast from the thought that through the rest of life she must remain an incomplete creature; had not the inner self lost its power of receiving impressions with that zest, that exquisite sense of freshness which is the spring of so much of life's gladness? The impressions of the future would for the most part be effaced as soon as received, and many of the thoughts which once would have moved her now would move her no more.

After the childhood of the creature dawns the childhood of the heart; but this second infancy was over, her lover had taken it down with him into the grave. The longings of youth remained; she was young yet; but the completeness of youth was gone, and with that lost completeness the whole value and savor of life had diminished somewhat. Would she not always bear within her the seeds of sadness and mistrust, ready to grow up and rob emotion of its springtide of fervor? Conscious she must always be that nothing could give her now the happiness so longed for, that seemed so fair in her dreams. The fire from heaven that sheds abroad its light in the heart, in the dawn of love, had been quenched in tears, the first real tears which she had shed; henceforth she must always suffer, because it was no longer in her power to be what once she might have been. This is a belief which turns us in aversion and bitterness of spirit from any proffered new delight.

Julie had come to look at life from the point of view of age about to die. Young though she felt, the heavy weight of joyless days had fallen upon her, and left her broken-spirited and old before her time. With a despairing cry, she asked the world what it could give her in exchange for the love now lost, by which she had lived. She asked herself whether in that vanished love, so chaste and pure, her will had not been more criminal than her deeds, and chose to believe herself guilty; partly to affront the world, partly for her own consolation, in that she had missed the close union of body and soul, which diminishes the pain of the one who

is left behind by the knowledge that once it has known and given joy to the full, and retains within itself the impress of that which is no more.

Something of the mortification of the actress cheated of her part mingled with the pain which thrilled through every fibre of her heart and brain. Her nature had been thwarted, her vanity wounded, her woman's generosity cheated of self-sacrifice. Then, when she had raised all these questions, set vibrating all the strings in those different phases of being which we distinguish as social, moral, and physical, her energies were so far exhausted and relaxed that she was powerless to grasp a single thought amid the chaos of conflicting ideas.

Sometimes, as the mists fell, she would throw her window open, and would stay there, motionless, breathing in unheedingly the damp earthy scent in the air, her mind to all appearance an unintelligent blank, for the ceaseless burden of sorrow humming in her brain left her deaf to earth's harmonies and insensible to the delights of thought.

One day, toward noon, when the sun shone out for a little, her maid came in without a summons.

"This is the fourth time that Monsieur le Curé has come to see Madame la Marquise; to-day he is so determined about it that we did not know what to tell him."

"He has come to ask for some money for the poor, no doubt; take him twenty-five louis from me."

The woman went only to return.

"Monsieur le Curé will not take the money, my lady; he wants to speak to you."

"Then let him come!" said Mme. d'Aiglemont, with an involuntary shrug which augured ill for the priest's reception. Evidently the lady meant to put a stop to persecution by a short and sharp method.

Mme. d'Aiglemont had lost her mother in her early childhood, and, as a natural consequence in her bringing-up, she had felt the influences of the relaxed notions which loosened the

hold of religion upon France during the Revolution. Piety is a womanly virtue which women alone can really instill; and the marquise, a child of the eighteenth century, had adopted her father's creed of philosophism and practiced no religious observances. A priest, to her way of thinking, was a civil servant of very doubtful utility. In her present position, the teaching of religion could only poison her wounds; she had, moreover, but scanty faith in the lights of country parsons, and made up her mind to put this one gently but firmly in his place, and to rid herself of him, after the manner of the rich, by bestowing a benefit.

At first sight of the curé the marquise felt no inclination to change her mind. She saw before her a stout, rotund little man, with a ruddy, wrinkled, elderly face, which awkwardly and unsuccessfully tried to smile. His bald, quadrant-shaped forehead, furrowed by intersecting lines, was too heavy for the rest of his face, which seemed to be dwarfed by it. A fringe of scanty, white hair encircled the back of his head, and almost reached his ears. Yet the priest looked as if by nature he had a genial disposition; his thick lips, his slightly curved nose, his chin which vanished in a double fold of wrinkles—all marked him out as a man who took cheerful views of life.

At first the marquise saw nothing but these salient characteristics, but at the first word she was struck by the sweetness of the speaker's voice. Looking at him more closely, she saw that the eyes under the grizzled eyebrows had shed tears, and his face, turned in profile, wore so sublime an impress of sorrow that the marquise recognized the man in the curé.

"Madame la Marquise, the rich only come within our province when they are in trouble. It is easy to see that the troubles of a young, beautiful, and wealthy married woman, who has lost neither children nor relatives, are caused by wounds whose pangs religion alone can soothe. Your soul is in danger, madame. I am not now speaking of the hereafter

which awaits us. No, I am not in the confessional. But it is my duty, is it not, to open your eyes to your future life here on earth? You will pardon an old man, will you not, for the importunity which has your own happiness for its object?"

"There is no more happiness for me, monsieur. I shall soon be, as you say, in your province; but it will be for ever."

"Nay, madame. You will not die of this pain which lies heavy upon you, and can be read in your face. If you had been destined to die of it, you would not be here at Saint-Lange. A definite regret is not so deadly as hope deferred. I have known others pass through more intolerable and more awful anguish, and yet they live."

The marquise looked incredulous.

"Madame, I know a man whose affliction was so sore that your trouble would seem to you to be light compared with his."

Perhaps the long solitary hours had begun to hang heavily; perhaps in the recesses of the marquise's mind lay the thought that here was a friendly heart to whom she might be able to pour out her troubles. However it was, she gave the rector a questioning glance which could not be mistaken.

"Madame," he continued, "the man of whom I tell you had but three children left of a once large family circle. He lost his parents, his daughter, and his wife, whom he dearly loved. He was left alone at last on the little farm where he had lived so happily for so long. His three sons were in the army, and each of the lads had risen in proportion to his time of service. During the Hundred Days, the oldest went into the Guard with a colonel's commission; the second was a major in the artillery; the youngest a major in a regiment of dragoons. Madame, those three boys loved their father as much as he loved them. If you but knew how careless young fellows grow of home ties when they are carried away by the

current of their own lives, you would realize from this one little thing how warmly they loved the lonely old father, who only lived in and for them—never a week passed without a letter from one of the boys. But, then, he on his side had never been weakly indulgent, to lessen their respect for him; nor unjustly severe, to thwart their affection; nor apt to grudge sacrifices, the thing that estranges children's hearts. He had been more than a father; he had been a brother to them, and their friend.

"At last he went to Paris to bid them good-by before they set out for Belgium; he wished to see that they had good horses and all that they needed. And so they went, and the father returned to his home again. Then the war began. He had letters from Fleurus, and again from Ligny. All went well. Then came the battle of Waterloo, and you know the rest. France was plunged into mourning; every family waited in intense anxiety for news. You may imagine, madame, how the old man waited for tidings, in anxiety that knew nor peace nor rest. He used to read the gazettes; he went to the coach-office every day. One evening he was told that the colonel's servant had come. The man was riding his master's horse—what need was there to ask any questions? —the colonel was dead, cut in two by a shell. Before the evening was out the youngest son's servant arrived—the youngest had died on the eve of the battle. At midnight came a gunner with tidings of the death of the last; upon whom, in those few hours, the poor father had centred all his life. Madame, they all had fallen."

After a pause the good man controlled his feelings, and added gently—

"And their father is still living, madame. He realized that if God had left him on earth, he was bound to live on and suffer on earth; but he took refuge in the sanctuary. What could he be?"

The marquise looked up and saw the curé's face, grown

sublime in its sorrow and resignation, and waited for him to speak. When the words came, tears broke from her.

"A priest, madame; consecrated by his own tears previously shed at the foot of the altar."

Silence prevailed for a little. The marquise and the curé looked out at the foggy landscape, as if they could see the figures of those who were no more.

"Not a priest in a city, but a simple country curé," added he.

"At Saint-Lange?" she said, drying her eyes.

"Yes, madame."

Never had the majesty of grief seemed so great to Julie. The two words sank straight into her heart with the weight of an infinite sorrow. The gentle, sonorous tones troubled her heart. Ah! that full, deep voice, charged with undulated vibration, was the voice of one who had suffered indeed.

"And if I do not die, monsieur, what will become of me?" The marquise spoke almost reverently.

"Have you not a child, madame?"

"Yes," she said stiffly.

The curé gave her a glance such as a doctor gives a patient whose life is in danger. Then he determined to do all that in him lay to combat the evil spirit into whose clutches she had fallen.

"We must live on with our sorrows—you see it yourself, madame—and religion alone offers us real consolation. Will you permit me to come again? to speak to you as a man who can sympathize with every trouble, a man about whom there is nothing very alarming, I think?"

"Yes, monsieur, come back again. Thank you for your thought of me."

"Very well, madame; then I shall return very shortly."

This visit relaxed the tension of soul, as it were; the heavy strain of grief and loneliness had been almost too much for the marquise's strength. The priest's visit had left a soothing

balm in her heart, his words thrilled through her with healing influence. She began to feel something of a prisoner's satisfaction when, after he has had time to feel his utter loneliness and the weight of his chains, he hears a neighbor knocking on the wall, and welcomes the sound which brings a sense of human fellowship. Here was an unhoped-for confidant. But this feeling did not last for long. Soon she sank back into the old bitterness of spirit, saying to herself, as the prisoner might say, that a companion in misfortune could neither lighten her own bondage nor her future.

In the first visit the curé had feared to alarm the susceptibilities of self-absorbed grief, in a second interview he hoped to make some progress toward religion. He came back again two days later, and from the marquise's welcome it was plain that she had looked forward to the visit.

"Well, Madame la Marquise, have you given a little thought to the great mass of human suffering? Have you raised your eyes above our earth and seen the immensity of the universe? the worlds beyond worlds which crush our vanity into insignificance, and with our vanity reduce our sorrows?"

"No, monsieur," she said; "I cannot rise to such heights, our social laws lie too heavily upon me and rend my heart with a too poignant anguish. And laws, perhaps, are less cruel than the usages of the world. Ah! the world!"

"Madame, we must obey both. Law is the doctrine, and custom the practice of society."

"Obey society?" cried the marquise, with an involuntary shudder. "Eh! monsieur, it is the source of all our woes. God laid down no law to make us miserable; but mankind, uniting together in social life, have perverted God's work. Civilization deals harder measure to us women than nature does. Nature imposes upon us physical suffering which you have not alleviated; civilization has developed in us thoughts and feelings which you cheat continually. Nature exterminates the weak; you condemn them to live, and, by so doing,

consign them to a life of misery. The whole weight of the burden of marriage, an institution on which society is based, falls upon us; for the man liberty, duties for the woman. We must give up our whole lives to you, you are only bound to give us a few moments of yours. A man, in fact, makes a choice, while we blindly submit. Oh, monsieur, to you I can speak freely. Marriage, in these days, seems to me to be legalized prostitution. This is the cause of my wretchedness. But among so many miserable creatures so unhappily yoked, I alone am bound to be silent, I alone am to blame for my misery. My marriage was my own doing."

She stopped short, and bitter tears fell in the silence.

"In the depths of my wretchedness, in the midst of this sea of distress," she went on, "I found some sands on which to set foot and suffer at leisure. A great tempest swept everything away. And here am I, helpless and alone, too weak to cope with storms."

"We are never weak while God is with us," said the priest. "And if your cravings for affection cannot be satisfied here on earth, have you no duties to perform?"

"Duties continually!" she exclaimed, with something of impatience in her tone. "But where for me are the sentiments which give us strength to perform them? Nothing from nothing, nothing for nothing—this, monsieur, is one of the most inexorable laws of nature, physical or spiritual. Would you have these trees break into leaf without the sap which swells the buds? It is the same with our human nature; and in me the sap is dried up at its source."

"I am not going to speak to you of religious sentiments of which resignation is born," said the rector, "but of motherhood, madame, surely——"

"Stop, monsieur!" said the marquise, "with you I will be sincere. Alas! in future I can be sincere with no one; I am condemned to falsehood. The world requires continual grimaces, and we are bidden to obey its conventions if we

would escape reproach. There are two kinds of motherhood, monsieur; once I knew nothing of such distinctions, but I know them now. Only half of me has become a mother; it were better for me if I had not been a mother at all. Helene is not *his* child! Oh! do not start. At Saint-Lange there are volcanic depths whence come lurid gleams of light and earthquake shocks to shake the fragile edifices of laws not based on nature. I have borne a child, that is enough, I am a mother in the eye of the law. But you, monsieur, with your delicately compassionate soul, can perhaps understand this cry from an unhappy woman who has suffered no lying illusions to enter her heart. God will judge me, but surely I have only obeyed His laws by giving way to the affections which He Himself set in me, and this I have learned from my own soul. What is a child, monsieur, but the image of two beings, the fruit of two sentiments spontaneously blended? Unless it is owned by every fibre of the body, as by every chord of tenderness in the heart; unless it recalls the bliss of love, the hours, the places where two creatures were happy, their words that overflowed with the music of humanity, and their sweet imaginings, that child is an incomplete creation. Yes, those two should find the poetic dreams of their intimate double life realized in their child as in an exquisite miniature; it should be for them a never-failing spring of emotion, implying their whole past and their whole future.

"My poor little Helene is her father's child, the offspring of duty and of chance. In me she finds nothing but the affection of instinct, the woman's natural compassion for the child of her womb. Socially speaking, I am above reproach. Have I not sacrificed my life and my happiness to my child? Her cries go to my heart; if she were to fall into the water, I should spring to save her, but she is not in my heart.

"Ah! love set me dreaming of a motherhood far greater and more complete. In a vanished dream I held in my arms a child conceived in desire before it was begotten, the ex-

quisite flower of life that blossoms in the soul before it sees the light of day. I am Helene's mother only in the sense that I brought her forth. When she needs me no longer, there will be an end of my motherhood; with the extinction of the cause, the effects will cease. If it is a woman's adorable prerogative that her motherhood may last through her child's life, surely that divine persistence of sentiment is due to the far-reaching glory of the conception of the soul? Unless a child has lain wrapped about from life's first beginnings by the mother's soul, the instinct of motherhood dies in her as in the animals. This is true; I feel that it is true. As my poor little one grows older, my heart closes. My sacrifices have driven us apart. And yet I know, monsieur, that to another child my heart would have gone out in inexhaustible love; for that other I should not have known what sacrifice meant, all had been delight. In this, monsieur, my instincts are stronger than reason, stronger than religion or all else in me. Does the woman who is neither wife nor mother sin in wishing to die when, for her misfortune, she has caught a glimpse of the infinite beauty of love, the limitless joy of motherhood? What can become of her? *I* can tell you what she feels. I cannot put that memory from me so resolutely but that a hundred times, night and day, visions of a happiness, greater it may be than the reality, rise before me, followed by a shudder which shakes brain and heart and body. Before these cruel visions, my feelings and thoughts grow colorless, and I ask myself: 'What would my life have been *if*——?'"

She hid her face in her hands and burst into tears.

"There you see the depths of my heart!" she continued. "For *his* child I could have acquiesced in any lot however dreadful. He who died, bearing the burden of the sins of the world, will forgive this thought of which I am dying; but the world, I know, is merciless. In its ears my words are blasphemies; I am outraging all its codes. Oh! that I could wage war against this world and break down and refashion its laws

and traditions! Has it not turned all my thoughts, and feelings, and longings, and hopes, and every fibre in me into so many sources of pain? Spoiled my future, present and past? For me the daylight is full of gloom, my thoughts pierce me like a sword, my child is and is not.

"Oh, when Helene speaks to me, I wish that her voice were different, when she looks into my face I wish that she had other eyes. She constantly keeps me in mind of all that should have been and is not. I cannot bear to have her near me. I smile at her, I try to make up to her for the real affection of which she is defrauded. I am wretched, monsieur, too wretched to live. And I am supposed to be a pattern wife. And I have committed no sins. And I am respected! I have fought down forbidden love which sprang up unaware within me; but if I have kept the letter of the law, have I kept it in my heart? There has never been but one here," she said, laying her right hand on her breast, "one and no other; and my child feels it. Certain looks and tones and gestures mould a child's nature, and my poor little one feels no thrill in the arm I put about her, no tremor comes into my voice, no softness into my eyes when I speak to her or take her up. She looks at me, and I cannot endure the reproach in her eyes. There are times when I shudder to think that some day she may be my judge and condemn her mother unheard. Heaven grant that hate may not grow up between us! Ah! God in heaven, rather let the tomb open for me, rather let me end my days here at Saint-Lange! I want to go back to the world where I shall find my other soul and become wholly a mother. Ah! forgive me, sir, I am mad. Those words were choking me; now they are spoken. Ah! you are weeping too! You will not despise me——"

She heard the child come in from a walk. "Helene, Helene, my child, come here!" she called. The words sounded like a cry of despair.

The little girl ran in, laughing and calling to her mother to

see a butterfly which she had caught; but at the sight of that mother's tears she grew quiet of a sudden, and went up close, and received a kiss on her forehead.

"She will be very beautiful some day," said the priest.

"She is her father's child," said the marquise, kissing the little one with eager warmth, as if she meant to pay a debt of affection or to extinguish some feeling of remorse.

"How hot you are, mamma!"

"There, go away, my angel," said the marquise.

The child went. She did not seem at all sorry to go; she did not look back; glad perhaps to escape from a sad face, and instinctively comprehending already an antagonism of feeling in its expression. A mother's love finds language in smiles; they are a part of the divine right of motherhood. The marquise could not smile. She flushed red as she felt the curé's eyes. She had hoped to act a mother's part before him, but neither she nor her child could deceive him. And, indeed, when a woman loves sincerely, in the kiss she gives there is a divine honey; it is as if a soul were breathed forth in the caress, a subtle flame of fire which brings warmth to the heart; the kiss that lacks this delicious unction is meagre and formal. The priest had felt the difference. He could fathom the depths that lie between the motherhood of the flesh and the motherhood of the heart. He gave the marquise a keen, scrutinizing glance, then he said—

"You are right, madame; it would be better for you if you were dead——"

"Ah!" she cried, "then you know all my misery; I see you do if, Christian priest as you are, you can guess my determination to die and sanction it. Yes, I meant to die, but I have lacked the courage. The spirit was strong, but the flesh was weak, and when my hand did not tremble, the spirit within me wavered.

"I do not know the reason of these inner struggles and alternations. I am very pitiably a woman, no doubt, weak in

my will, strong only to love. Oh, I despise myself. At night, when all my household was asleep, I would go out bravely as far as the lake; but when I stood on the brink my cowardice shrank from self-destruction. To you I will confess my weakness. When I lay in my bed again, shame would come over me and courage would come back. Once I took a dose of laudanum; I was ill, but I did not die. I thought I had emptied the phial, but I had only taken half the dose."

"You are lost, madame," the curé said gravely, with tears in his voice. "You will go back into the world, and you will deceive the world. You will seek and find a compensation (as you imagine it to be) for your woes; then will come a day of reckoning for your pleasures——"

"Do you think," she cried, "that I shall bestow the last, the most precious treasures of my heart upon the first base impostor who can play the comedy of passion? That I would pollute my life for a moment of doubtful pleasure? No; the flame which shall consume my soul shall be love, and nothing but love. All men, monsieur, have the senses of their sex, but not all have the man's soul which satisfies all the requirements of our nature, drawing out the melodious harmony which never breaks forth save in response to the pressure of feeling. Such a soul is not found twice in our lifetime. The future that lies before me is hideous; I know it. A woman is nothing without love; beauty is nothing without pleasure. And even if happiness were offered to me a second time, would not the world frown upon it? I owe my daughter an honored mother. Oh! I am condemned to live in an iron circle, from which there is but one shameful way of escape. The round of family duties, a thankless and irksome task, is in store for me. I shall curse life; but my child shall have at least a fair semblance of a mother. I will give her treasures of virtue for the treasures of love of which I defraud her.

"I have not even the mother's desire to live to enjoy her child's happiness. I have no belief in happiness. What will

Helene's fate be? My own, beyond doubt. How can a mother insure that the man to whom she gives her daughter will be the husband of her heart? You pour scorn on the miserable creatures who sell themselves for a few coins to any passer-by, though want and hunger absolve the brief union; while another union, horrible for quite other reasons, is tolerated, nay, encouraged, by society, and a young and innocent girl is married to a man whom she has only met occasionally during the previous three months. She is sold for her whole lifetime. It is true that the price is high! If you allow her no compensation for her sorrows, you might at least respect her; but no, the most virtuous of women cannot escape calumny. This is our fate in its double aspect. Open prostitution and shame; secret prostitution and unhappiness. As for the poor, portionless girls, they may die or go mad, without a soul to pity them. Beauty aud virtue are not marketable in the bazaar where souls and bodies are bought and sold—in the den of selfishness which you call society. Why not disinherit daughters? Then, at least, you might fulfill one of the laws of nature, and, guided by your own inclinations, choose your companions."

"Madame, from your talk it is clear to me that neither the spirit of family nor the sense of religion appeals to you. Why should you hesitate between the claims of the social selfishness which irritates you and the purely personal selfishness which craves satisfactions——"

"The family, monsieur—does such a thing exist? I decline to recognize as a family a knot of individuals bidden by society to divide the property after the death of father and mother, and to go their separate ways. A family means a temporary association of persons brought together by no will of their own, dissolved at once by death. Our laws have broken up homes and estates, and the old family tradition handed down from generation to generation. I see nothing but wreck and ruin about me."

"Madame, you will only return to God when His hand has been heavy upon you, and I pray that you have time enough given to you in which to make your peace with Him. Instead of looking to heaven for comfort, you are fixing your eyes on earth. Philosophism and personal interest have invaded your heart; like the children of the skeptical eighteenth century, you are deaf to the voice of religion. The pleasures of this life bring nothing but misery. You are about to make an exchange of sorrows, that is all."

She smiled bitterly.

"I will falsify your predictions," she said. "I shall be faithful to him who died for me."

"Sorrow," he answered, "is not likely to live long save in souls disciplined by religion," and he lowered his eyes respectfully lest the marquise should read his doubts in them. The energy of her outburst had grieved him. He had seen the self that lurked beneath so many forms, and despaired of softening a heart which affliction seemed to sear. The divine Sower's seed could not take root in such a soil, and His gentle voice was drowned by the clamorous outcry of self-pity. Yet the good man returned again and again with an apostle's earnest persistence, brought back by a hope of leading so noble and proud a soul to God; until the day when he made the discovery that the marquise only cared to talk with him because it was sweet to speak of him who was no more. He would not lower his ministry by condoning her passion, and confined the conversation more and more to generalities and commonplaces.

Spring came, and with the spring the marquise found distraction from her deep melancholy. She busied herself for lack of other occupation with her estate, making improvements for amusement.

In October she left the old castle. In the life of leisure at Saint-Lange she had recovered from her grief and grown fair and fresh. Her grief had been violent at first in its course,

as the quoit hurled forth with all the player's strength, and like the quoit after many oscillations, each feebler than the last, it had slackened into melancholy. Melancholy is made up of a succession of such oscillations, the first touching upon despair, the last on the border between pain and pleasure; in youth, it is the twilight of dawn; in age, the dusk of night.

As the marquise drove through the village in her traveling carriage, she met the priest on his way back from the church. She bowed in response to his farewell greeting, but it was with lowered eyes and averted face. She did not wish to see him again. The village rector had judged this poor Diana of Ephesus only too well.

III.

AT THIRTY YEARS.

Madame Firmiani was giving a ball. M. Charles de Vandenesse, a young man of great promise, the bearer of one of those historic names which, in spite of the efforts of legislation, are always associated with the glory of France, had received letters of introduction to some of the great lady's friends in Naples, and had come to thank the hostess and to take his leave.

Vandenesse had already acquitted himself creditably on several diplomatic missions; and now that he had received an appointment as attaché to a plenipotentiary at the Congress of Laybach, he wished to take advantage of the opportunity to make some study of Italy on the way. This ball was a sort of farewell to Paris and its amusements and its rapid whirl of life, to the great eddying intellectual centre and maelstrom of pleasure; and a pleasant thing it is to be borne along by the current of this sufficiently slandered great city of Paris. Yet Charles de Vandenesse had little to regret, accustomed as he had been for the past three years to salute European capitals and turn his back upon them at the capricious bidding of a diplomatist's destiny. Women no longer made any impression upon him; perhaps he thought that a real passion would play too large a part in a diplomatist's life; or perhaps that the paltry amusements of frivolity were too empty for a man of strong character. We all of us have huge claims to strength of character. There is no man in France, be he never so ordinary a member of the rank and file of humanity, that will waive pretensions to something beyond mere cleverness.

Charles, young though he was—he was scarcely turned

thirty—looked at life with a philosophic mind, concerning himself with theories and means and ends, while other men of his age were thinking of pleasure, sentiments, and the like illusions. He forced back into some inner depth the generosity and enthusiasms of youth, and by nature he was generous. He tried hard to be cool and calculating, to coin the fund of wealth which chanced to be in his nature into gracious manners, and courtesy, and attractive arts; 'tis the proper task of an ambitious man to play a sorry part to gain "a good position," as we call it in modern days.

He had been dancing, and now he gave a farewell glance over the rooms, to carry away a distinct impression of the ball, moved, doubtless, to some extent by the feeling which prompts a theatre-goer to stay in his box to see the final tableau before the curtain falls. But M. de Vandenesse had another reason for his survey. He gazed curiously at the scene before him, so French in character and in movement, seeking to carry away a picture of the light and laughter and the faces at this Parisian fête, to compare with novel faces and picturesque surroundings awaiting him at Naples, where he meant to spend a few days before presenting himself at his post. He seemed to be drawing the comparsion now between this France so variable, changing even as you study her, with the manners and aspects of that other land known to him as yet only by contradictory hearsay tales or books of travel, for the most part unsatisfactory. Thoughts of a somewhat poetical cast, albeit hackneyed and trite to our modern ideas, crossed his brain, in response to some longing of which, perhaps, he himself was hardly conscious, a desire in the depths of a heart fastidious rather than jaded, vacant rather than seared.

"These are the wealthiest and most fashionable women and the greatest ladies in Paris," he said to himself. "These are the great men of the day, great orators and men of letters, great names and titles; artists and men in power; and yet in it all it seems to me as if there were nothing but petty in-

trigues and still-born loves, meaningless smiles and causeless scorn, eyes lighted by no flame within, brain-power in abundance running aimlessly to waste. All those pink-and-white faces are here not so much for enjoyment, as to escape from dullness. None of the emotion is genuine. If you ask for nothing but court feathers properly adjusted, fresh gauzes and pretty toilets and fragile, fair women, if you desire simply to skim the surface of life, here is your world for you. Be content with meaningless phrases and fascinating simpers, and do not ask for real feeling. For my own part, I abhor the stale intrigues which end in sub-prefectures and receiver-generals' places and marriages; or, if love comes into the question, in stealthy compromises, so ashamed are we of the mere semblance of passion. Not a single one of all these eloquent faces tells you of a soul, a soul wholly absorbed by one idea as by remorse. Regrets and misfortune go about shamefacedly clad in jests. There is not one woman here whose resistance I should care to overcome, not one who could drag you down to the pit. Where will you find energy in Paris? A poniard here is a curious toy to hang from a gilt nail, in a picturesque sheath to match. The women, the brains, and hearts of Paris are all on a par. There is no passion left, because we have no individuality. High birth and intellect and fortune are all reduced to one level; we have all taken to the uniform black coat by way of mourning for a dead France. There is no love between equals. Between two lovers there should be differences to efface, wide gulfs to fill. The charm of love fled from us in 1789. Our dullness and our humdrum lives are the outcome of the political system. Italy, at any rate, is the land of sharp contrasts. Woman there is a malevolent animal, a dangerous unreasoning siren, guided only by her tastes and appetites, a creature no more to be trusted than a tiger——"

Mme. Firmiani here came up to interrupt this soliloquy made up of vague, conflicting, and fragmentary thoughts

which cannot be reproduced in words. The whole charm of such musing lies in its vagueness—what is it but a sort of mental haze?

"I want to introduce you to some one who has the greatest wish to make your acquaintance, after all that she has heard of you," said the lady, taking his arm.

She brought him into the next room, and, with such a smile and glance as a Parisienne alone can give, she indicated a woman sitting by the hearth.

"Who is she?" the Comte de Vandenesse asked quickly.

"You have heard her name more than once coupled with praise or blame. She is a woman who lives in seclusion—a perfect mystery."

"Oh! if ever you have been merciful in your life, for pity's sake, tell me her name."

"She is the Marquise d'Aiglemont."

"I will take lessons from her; she has managed to make a peer of France of that eminently ordinary person her husband, and a dullard into a power in the land. But, pray tell me this, did Lord Grenville die for her sake, do you think, as some women say?"

"Possibly. Since that adventure, real or imaginary, she is very much changed, poor thing! She has not gone into society since. Four years of constancy—that is something in Paris. If she is here to-night——" Here Mme. Firmiani broke off, adding with a mysterious expression, "I am forgetting that I must say nothing. Go and talk with her."

For a moment Charles stood motionless, leaning lightly against the frame of the doorway, wholly absorbed in his scrutiny of a woman who had become famous no one knew exactly how or why. Such curious anomalies are frequent enough in the world. Mme. d'Aiglemont's reputation was certainly no more extraordinary than plenty of other great reputations. There are men who are always in travail of some great work which never sees the light, statisticians held to be

profound on the score of calculations which they take very good care not to publish, politicians who live on a newspaper article, men of letters and artists whose performances are never given to the world, men of science who pass current among those who know nothing of science, much as Sganarelle is a Latinist for those who know no Latin; there are the men who are allowed by general consent to possess a peculiar capacity for some one thing, be it for the direction of arts, or for the conduct of an important mission. The admirable phrase, "A man with a special subject," might have been invented on purpose for these acephalous species in the domain of literature and politics.

Charles gazed longer than he intended. He was vexed with himself for feeling so strongly interested; it is true, however, that the lady's appearance was a refutation of the young man's ballroom generalizations.

The marquise had reached her thirtieth year. She was beautiful in spite of her fragile form and extremely delicate look. Her greatest charm lay in her still face, revealing unfathomed depths of soul. Some haunting, ever-present thought veiled, as it were, the full brilliance of eyes which told of a fevered life and boundless resignation. So seldom did she raise the eyelids soberly downcast, and so listless were her glances, that it almost seemed as if the fire in her eyes were reserved for some occult contemplation. Any man of genius and feeling must have felt strangely attracted by her gentleness and silence. If the mind sought to explain the mysterious problem of a constant inward turning from the present to the past, the soul was no less interested in initiating itself into the secrets of a heart proud in some sort of its anguish. Everything about her, moreover, was in keeping with these thoughts which she inspired. Like almost all women who have very long hair, she was very pale and perfectly white. The marvelous fineness of her skin (that almost unerring sign) indicated a quick sensibility which could be seen yet more

unmistakably in her features; there was the same minute and wonderful delicacy of finish in them that the Chinese artist gives to his fantastic figures. Perhaps her neck was rather too long, but such necks belong to the most graceful type, and suggest vague affinities between a woman's head and the magnetic curves of the serpent. Leave not a single one of the thousand signs and tokens by which the most inscrutable character betrays itself to an observer of human nature, he has but to watch carefully the little movements of a woman's head, the ever-varying expressive turns and curves of her neck and throat, to read her nature.

Mme. d'Aiglemont's dress harmonized with the haunting thought that informed the whole woman. Her hair was gathered up into a tall coronet of broad plaits, without ornament of any kind; she seemed to have bidden farewell for ever to elaborate toilettes. Nor were any of the small arts of coquetry which spoil so many women to be detected in her. Perhaps her bodice, modest though it was, did not altogether conceal the dainty grace of her figure; perhaps, too, her gown looked rich from the extreme distinction of its fashion; and if it is permissible to look for expression in the arrangement of stuffs, surely those numerous straight folds invested her with a great dignity. There may have been some lingering trace of the indelible feminine foible in the minute care bestowed upon her hand and foot; yet, if she allowed them to be seen with some pleasure, it would have tasked the utmost malice of a rival to discover any affectation in her gestures, so natural did they seem, so much a part of old childish habit, that her careless grace absolved this vestige of vanity.

All these little characteristics, the nameless trifles which combine to make up the sum of a woman's prettiness or ugliness, her charm or lack of charm, can only be indicated, when, as with Mme. d'Aiglemont, a personality dominates and gives coherence to the details, informing them, blending them all in an exquisite whole. Her manner was perfectly in

accord with her style of beauty and her dress. Only to certain women at a certain age is it given to put language into their attitude. Is it joy or is it sorrow that teaches a woman of thirty the secret of that eloquence of carriage, so that she must always remain an enigma which each interprets by the aid of his hopes, desires, or theories?

The way in which the marquise leaned both elbows on the arm of her chair, the toying of her interclasped fingers, the curve of her throat, the indolent lines of her languid but lissome body as she lay back in graceful exhaustion, as it were; her indolent limbs, her unstudied pose, the utter lassitude of her movements, all suggested that this was a woman for whom life had lost its interest, a woman who had known the joys of love only in dreams, a woman bowed down by the burden of memories of the past, a woman who had long since despaired of the future and despaired of herself, an unoccupied woman who took the emptiness of her own life for the nothingness of life.

Charles de Vandenesse saw and admired the beautiful picture before him, as a kind of artistic success beyond an ordinary woman's powers of attainment. He was acquainted with d'Aiglemont; and now, at the first sight of d'Aiglemont's wife, the young diplomatist saw at a glance a disproportionate marriage, an incompatibility (to use the legal jargon) so great that it was impossible that the marquise should love her husband. And yet—the Marquise d'Aiglemont's life was above reproach, and for any observer the mystery about her was the more interesting on this account. The first impulse of surprise over, Vandenesse cast about for the best way of approaching Mme. d'Aiglemont. He would try a commonplace piece of diplomacy, he thought; he would disconcert her by a piece of clumsiness and see how she would receive it.

"Madame," he said, seating himself near her, "through a fortunate indiscretion I have learned that, for some reason unknown to me, I have had the good fortune to attract your

notice. I owe you the more thanks because I have never been so honored before. At the same time, you are responsible for one of my faults, for I mean never to be modest again——"

"You will make a mistake, monsieur," she laughed; "vanity should be left to those who have nothing else to recommend them."

The conversation thus opened ranged at large, in the usual way, over a multitude of topics—art and literature, politics, men and things—till insensibly they fell to talking of the eternal theme in France and all the world over—love, sentiment, and women.

"We are bond-slaves."

"You are queens."

This was the gist and substance of all the more or less ingenuous discourse between Charles and the marquise, as of all such discourses—past, present, and to come. Allow a certain space of time, and the two formulas shall begin to mean "Love me," and "I will love you."

"Madame," Charles de Vandenesse exclaimed under his breath, "you have made me bitterly regret that I am leaving Paris. In Italy I certainly shall not pass hours in intellectual enjoyment such as this has been."

"Perhaps, monsieur, you will find happiness, and happiness is worth more than all the brilliant things, true and false, that are said every evening in Paris."

Before Charles took leave, he asked permission to pay a farewell call on the Marquise d'Aiglemont, and very lucky did he feel himself when the form of words in which he expressed himself for once was used in all sincerity; and that night, and all day long on the morrow, he could not put the thought of the marquise out of his mind.

At times he wondered why she had singled him out, what she had meant when she asked him to come to see her, and thought supplied an inexhaustible commentary. Again it

seemed to him that he had discovered the motives of her curiosity, and he grew intoxicated with hope or frigidly sober with each new construction put upon that piece of commonplace civility. Sometimes it meant everything, sometimes nothing. He made up his mind at last that he would not yield to this inclination, and—went to call on Mme. d' Aiglemont.

There are thoughts which determine our conduct, while we do not so much as suspect their existence. If at first sight this assertion appears to be less a truth than a paradox, let any candid inquirer look into his own life and he shall find abundant confirmation therein. Charles went to Mme. d'Aiglemont, and so obeyed one of these latent, preëxistent germs of thought, of which our experience and our intellectual gains and achievements are but later and tangible developments.

For a young man a woman of thirty has irresistible attractions. There is nothing more natural, nothing better established, no human tie of stouter tissue than the heart-deep attachment between such a woman as the Marquise d'Aiglemont and such a man as Charles de Vandenesse. You can see examples of it every day in the world. A girl, as a matter of fact, has too many young illusions, she is too inexperienced, the instinct of sex counts for too much in her love for a young man to feel flattered by it. A woman of thirty knows all that is involved in the self-surrender to be made. Among the impulses of the first, put curiosity and other motives than love; the second acts with integrity of sentiment. The first yields; the second makes deliberate choice. Is not that choice in itself an immense flattery? A woman armed with experience, forewarned by knowledge, almost always dearly bought, seems to give more than herself; while the inexperienced and credulous girl, unable to draw comparisons for lack of knowledge, can appreciate nothing at its just worth. She accepts love and ponders it. A woman is a counselor and a guide at an age

when we love to be guided and obedience is delight; while a girl would fain learn all things, meeting us with a girl's *naïveté* instead of a woman's tenderness. She affords a single triumph: with a woman there is resistance upon resistance to overcome; she has but joy and tears, a woman has rapture and remorse.

A girl cannot play the part of a mistress unless she is so corrupt that we turn from her with loathing; a woman has a thousand ways of preserving her power and her dignity; she has risked so much for love that she must bid him pass through his myriad transformations, while her too submissive rival gives a sense of too serene security which palls. If the one sacrifices her maidenly pride, the other immolates the honor of a whole family. A girl's coquetry is of the simplest, she thinks that all is said when the veil is laid aside; a woman's coquetry is endless, she shrouds herself in veil after veil, she satisfies every demand of man's vanity, the novice responds but to one.

And there are terrors, fears, and hesitations—trouble and storm in the love of a woman of thirty years, never to be found in a young girl's love. At thirty years a woman asks her lover to give her back the esteem she has forfeited for his sake; she lives only for him, her thoughts are full of his future, he must have a great career, she bids him make it glorious; she can obey, entreat, command, humble herself, or rise in pride; times without number she brings comfort when a young girl can only make moan. And with all the advantages of her position, the woman of thirty can be a girl again, for she can play all parts, assume a girl's bashfulness, and grow the fairer even for a mischance.

Between these two feminine types lies the immeasurable difference which separates the foreseen from the unforeseen, strength from weakness. The woman of thirty satisfies every requirement; the young girl must satisfy none, under penalty of ceasing to be a young girl. Such ideas as these, developing

in a young man's mind, help to strengthen the strongest of all passions, a passion in which all spontaneous and natural feeling is blended with the artificial sentiment created by conventional manners.

The most important and decisive step in a woman's life is the very one that she invariably regards as the most insignificant. After her marriage she is no longer her own mistress, she is the queen and the bond-slave of the domestic hearth. The sanctity of womanhood is incompatible with social liberty and social claims; and for a woman emancipation means corruption. If you give a stranger the right of entry into the sanctuary of home, do you not put yourself at his mercy? How then if she herself bids him enter? Is not this an offense, or, to speak more accurately, a first step toward an offense? You must either accept this theory with all its consequences, or absolve illicit passion. French society hitherto has chosen the third and middle course of looking on and laughing when offenses come, apparently upon the Spartan principle of condoning the theft and punishing clumsiness. And this system, it may be, is a very wise one. 'Tis a most appalling punishment to have all your neighbors pointing the finger of scorn at you, a punishment that a woman feels in her very heart. Women are tenacious, and all of them should be tenacious of respect; without esteem they cannot exist, esteem is the first demand that they make of love. The most corrupt among them feels that she must, in the first place, pledge the future to buy absolution for the past, and strives to make her lover understand that only for irresistible bliss can she barter the respect which the world will henceforth absolutely refuse to her.

Some such reflections cross the mind of any woman who for the first time and alone receives a visit from a young man; and this especially when, like Charles de Vandenesse, the visitor is handsome or clever. And similarly there are not many young men who would fail to base some secret wish on

one of the thousand and one ideas which justify the instinct that attracts them to a beautiful, witty, and unhappy woman like the Marquise d'Aiglemont.

Mme. d'Aiglemont, therefore, felt troubled when M. de Vandenesse was announced; and, as for him, he was almost confused in spite of the assurance which is like a matter of costume for a diplomatist. But not for long. The marquise took refuge at once in the friendliness of manner which women use as a defense against the misinterpretations of fatuity, a manner which admits of no afterthought, while it paves the way to sentiment (to make use of a figure of speech), tempering the transition through the ordinary forms of politeness. In this ambiguous position, where the four roads leading respectively to Indifference, Respect, Wonder, and Passion meet, a woman may stay as long as she pleases, but only at thirty years does she understand all the possibilities of the situation. Laughter, tenderness, and jest are all permitted to her at the crossing of the ways; she has acquired the tact by which she finds all the responsive chords in a man's nature, and skill in judging the sounds which she draws forth. Her silence is as dangerous as her speech. You will never read her at that age, nor discover if she is frank or false, nor how far she is serious in her admissions or merely laughing at you. She gives you the right to engage in a game of fence with her, and suddenly by a glance, a gesture of proved potency, she closes the combat and turns from you with your secret in her keeping, free to offer you up to a jest, free to interest herself in you, safe alike in her weakness and your strength.

Although the Marquise d'Aiglemont took up her position upon this neutral ground during the first interview, she knew how to preserve a high womanly dignity. The sorrows of which she never spoke seemed to hang over her assumed gayety like a light cloud obscuring the sun. When Vandenesse went out, after a conversation which he had enjoyed more than he had thought possible, he carried with him the

conviction that this was like to be too costly a conquest for his aspirations.

"It would mean sentiment from here to yonder," he thought, "and correspondence enough to wear out a deputy second-clerk on his promotion. And yet if I really cared——"

Luckless phrase that has been the ruin of many an infatuated mortal. In France the way to love lies through self-love. Charles went back to Mme. d'Aiglemont, and imagined that she showed symptoms of pleasure in his conversation. And then, instead of giving himself up like a boy to the joy of falling in love, he tried to play a double role. He did his best to act passion and to keep cool enough to analyze the progress of this flirtation, to be lover and diplomatist at once; but youth and hot blood and analysis could only end in one way, over head and ears in love; for, natural or artificial, the marquise was more than his match. Each time as he went out from Mme. d'Aiglemont, he strenuously held himself to his distrust, and submitted the progressive situations of his case to a rigorous scrutiny fatal to his own emotions.

"To-day she gave me to understand that she has been very unhappy and lonely," said he to himself, after the third visit, "and that but for her little girl she would have longed for death. She was perfectly resigned. Now as I am neither her brother nor her spiritual director, why should she confide her troubles to *me?* She loves me."

Two days later he came away apostrophizing modern manners.

"Love takes on the hue of every age. In 1822 love is a doctrinaire. Instead of proving love by deeds, as in times past, we have taken to argument and rhetoric and debate. Women's tactics are reduced to three shifts. In the first place, they declare that we cannot love as they love. (Coquetry! the marquise simply threw it at me, like a challenge, this evening!) Next they grow pathetic, to appeal to our natural generosity or self-love; for does it not flatter a young

man's vanity to console a woman for a great calamity. And, lastly, they have a craze for virginity. She must have thought that I thought her very innocent. My good faith is like to become an excellent speculation."

But a day came when every suspicious idea was exhausted. He asked himself whether the marquise was not sincere; whether so much suffering could be feigned, and why she should act the part of resignation? She lived in complete seclusion; she drank in silence of a cup of sorrow scarcely to be guessed unless from the accent of some chance exclamation in a voice always well under control. From that moment Charles felt a keen interest in Mme. d'Aiglemont. And yet, though his visits had come to be a recognized thing, and in some sort a necessity to them both, and though the hour was kept free by tacit agreement, Vandenesse still thought that this woman with whom he was in love was more clever than sincere. "Decidedly, she is an uncommonly clever woman," he used to say to himself as he went away.

When he came into the room, there was the marquise in her favorite attitude, melancholy expressed in her whole form. She made no movement when he entered, only raised her eyes and looked full at him, but the glance that she gave him was like a smile. Mme. d'Aiglemont's manner meant confidence and sincere friendship, but of love there was no trace. Charles sat down and found nothing to say. A sensation for which no language exists troubled him.

"What is the matter with you?" she asked in a softened voice.

"Nothing. Yes; I am thinking of something of which, as yet, you have not thought at all."

"What is it?"

"Why—the Congress is over."

"Well," she said, "and ought you to have been at the Congress?"

A direct answer would have been the most eloquent and

delicate declaration of love; but Charles did not make it. Before the candid friendship in Mme. d'Aiglemont's face all the calculations of vanity, the hopes of love, and the diplomatist's doubts died away. She did not suspect, or she seemed not to suspect, his love for her; and Charles, in utter confusion turning upon himself, was forced to admit that he had said and done nothing which could warrant such a belief on her part. For M. de Vandenesse that evening, the marquise was, as she had always been, simple and friendly, sincere in her sorrow, glad to have a friend, proud to find a nature responsive to her own—nothing more. It had not entered her mind that a woman could yield twice; she had known love—love still lay bleeding in the depths of her heart, but she did not imagine that bliss could bring her its rapture twice, for she believed not merely in the intellect, but in the soul; and for her love was no simple attraction; it drew her with all noble attractions.

In a moment Charles became a young man again, enthralled by the splendor of a nature so lofty. He wished for a fuller initiation into the secret history of a life blighted rather by fate than by her own fault. Mme. d'Aiglemont heard him ask the cause of the overwhelming sorrow which had blended all the harmonies of sadness with her beauty; she gave him one glance, but that searching look was like a seal set upon some solemn compact.

"Ask no more such questions of me," she said. "Four years ago, on this very day, the man who loved me, for whom I would have given up everything, even my own self-respect, died, and died to save my name. That love was still young and pure and full of illusions when it came to an end. Before I gave way to passion—and never was woman so urged by fate—I had been drawn into the mistake that ruins many a girl's life, a marriage with a man whose agreeable manners concealed his emptiness. Marriage plucked my hopes away one by one. And now, to-day, I have forfeited happiness through marriage,

as well as the happiness styled criminal, and I have known no happiness. Nothing is left to me. If I could not die, at the least I ought to be faithful to my memories."

No tears came with the words. Her eyes fell, and there was a slight twisting of the fingers interclasped, according to her wont. It was simply said, but in her voice there was a note of despair, deep as her love seemed to have been, which left Charles without a hope. The dreadful story of a life told in three sentences, with that twisting of the fingers for all comment, the might of anguish in a fragile woman, the dark depths masked by a fair face, the tears of four years of mourning, fascinated Vandenesse; he sat silent and diminished in the presence of her woman's greatness and nobleness, seeing not the physical beauty so exquisite, so perfectly complete, but the soul so great in its power to feel. He had found, at last, the ideal of his fantastic imaginings, the ideal so vigorously invoked by all who look on life as the raw material of a passion for which many a one seeks ardently, and dies before he has grasped the whole of the dreamed-of treasure.

With those words of hers in his ears, in the presence of her sublime beauty, his own thoughts seemed poor and narrow. Powerless as he felt himself to find words of his own, simple enough and lofty enough to scale the heights of this exaltation, he took refuge in platitudes as to the destiny of women.

"Madame, we must either forget our pain or hollow out a tomb for ourselves."

But reason always cuts a poor figure beside sentiment; the one being essentially restricted, like everything that is positive, while the other is infinite. To set to work to reason where you are required to feel is the mark of a limited nature. Vandenesse therefore held his peace, sat awhile with his eyes fixed upon her, then went away. A prey to novel thoughts which exalted woman for him, he was in something the same position as a painter who has taken the vulgar studio model for a type of womanhood, and suddenly confronts the

Mnemosynë of the Museum—that noblest and least appreciated of antique statues.

Charles de Vandenesse was deeply in love. He loved Mme. d'Aiglemont with the loyalty of youth, with the fervor that communicates such ineffable charm to a first passion, with a simplicity of heart of which a man only recovers some fragments when he loves again at a later day. Delicious first passion of youth, almost always deliciously savored by the woman who calls it forth; for at the golden prime of thirty, from the poetic summit of a woman's life, she can look out over the whole course of love—backward into the past, forward into the future—and, knowing all the price to be paid for love, enjoys her bliss with the dread of losing it ever present with her. Her soul is still fair with her waning youth, and passion daily gathers strength from the dismaying prospect of the coming days.

"This is love," Vandenesse said to himself this time as he left the marquise, "and for my misfortune I love a woman wedded to her memories. It is hard work to struggle against a dead rival, never present to make blunders and fall out of favor, nothing of him left but his better qualities. What is it but a sort of high treason against the Ideal to attempt to break the charm of memory, to destroy the hopes that survive a lost lover, precisely because he only awakened longings, and all that is loveliest and most enchanting in love?"

These sober reflections, due to the discouragement and dread of failure with which love begins in earnest, were the last expiring effort of diplomatic reasoning. Thenceforward he knew no afterthoughts, he was the plaything of his love, and lost himself in the nothings of that strange inexplicable happiness which is full fed by a chance word, by silence, or a vague hope. He tried to love Platonically, came daily to breathe the air that she breathed, became almost a part of her house, and went everywhere with her, slave as he was of a tyrannous passion compounded of egoism and devotion of

the completest. Love has its own instinct, finding the way to the heart, as the feeblest insect finds the way to its flower, with a will which nothing can dismay nor turn aside. If feeling is sincere, its destiny is not doubtful. Let a woman begin to think that her life depends on the sincerity or fervor or earnestness which her lover shall put into his longings, and is there not sufficient in the thought to put her through all the tortures of dread? It is impossible for a woman, be she wife or mother, to be secure from a young man's love. One thing it is within her power to do—to refuse to see him as soon as she learns a secret which she never fails to guess. But this is too decided a step to take at an age when marriage has become a prosaic and tiresome yoke, and conjugal affection is something less than tepid (if indeed her husband has not already begun to neglect her). Is a woman plain? She is flattered by a love which gives her fairness. Is she young and charming? She is only to be won by a fascination as great as her own power to charm; that is to say, a fascination well-nigh irresistible. Is she virtuous? There is a love sublime in its earthliness which leads her to find something like absolution in the very greatness of the surrender and glory in a hard struggle. Everything is a snare. No lesson, therefore, is too severe where the temptation is so strong. The seclusion in which the Greeks and Orientals kept and keep their women, an example more and more followed in modern England, is the only safeguard of domestic morality; but under this system there is an end of all the charm of social intercourse; and society, and good breeding, and refinement of manners become impossible. The nations must take their choice.

So a few months went by, and Mme. d'Aiglemont discovered that her life was closely bound with this young man's life, without overmuch confusion in her surprise, and felt with something almost like pleasure that she shared his tastes and his thoughts. Had she adopted Vandenesse's ideas? Or was it Vandenesse who had made her lightest whims his own?

She was not careful to inquire. She had been swept out already into the current of passion, and yet this adorable woman told herself, with the confident reiteration of misgiving—

"Ah! no. I will be faithful to him who died for me."

Pascal said that "the doubt of God implies belief in God." And similarly it may be said that a woman only parleys when she has surrendered. A day came when the marquise admitted to herself that she was loved, and with that admission came a time of wavering among countless conflicting thoughts and feelings. The superstitions of experience spoke their language. Should she be happy? Was it possible that she should find happiness outside the limits of the laws which society rightly or wrongly has set up for humanity to live by? Hitherto her cup of life had been full of bitterness. Was there any happy issue possible for the ties which united two human beings held apart by social conventions? And might not happiness be bought too dear? Still, this so ardently desired happiness, for which it is so natural to seek, might perhaps be found after all. Curiosity is always retained on the lover's side in the suit. The secret tribunal was still sitting when Vandenesse appeared, and his presence put the metaphysical spectre, reason, to flight.

If such are the successive transformations through which a sentiment, transient though it be, passes in a young man and a woman of thirty, there comes a moment of time when the shades of difference blend into each other, when all reasonings end in a single and final reflection which is lost and absorbed in the desire which it confirms. Then the longer the resistance, the mightier the voice of love. And here endeth this lesson, or rather this study made from the *écorché*, to borrow a most graphic term from the studio, for in this history it is not so much intended to portray love as to lay bare its mechanism and its dangers. From this moment every day adds color to these dry bones, clothes them again with living

flesh and blood and the charm of youth, and puts vitality into their movements; till they glow once more with the beauty, the persuasive grace of sentiment, the loveliness of life.

Charles found Mme. d'Aiglemont absorbed in thought, and to his: "What is it?" spoken in thrilling tones grown persuasive with the heart's soft magic, she was careful not to reply. The delicious question bore witness to the perfect unity of their spirits; and the marquise felt, with a woman's wonderful intuition, that to give any expression to the sorrow in her heart would be to make an advance. If, even now, each one of those words was fraught with significance for them both, in what fathomless depths might she not plunge at the first step? She read herself with a clear and lucid glance. She was silent, and Vandenesse followed her example.

"I am not feeling well," she said at last, taking alarm at the pause fraught with such great moment for them both, when the language of the eyes completely filled the blank left by the helplessness of speech.

"Madame," said Charles, and his voice was tender but unsteady with strong feeling, "soul and body are both dependent on each other. If you were happy, you would be young and fresh. Why do you refuse to ask of love all that love has taken from you? You think that your life is over when it is only just beginning. Trust yourself to a friend's care. It is so sweet to be loved."

"I am old already," she said; "there is no reason why I should not continue to suffer as in the past. And 'one must love,' do you say? Well, I must not, and I cannot. Your friendship has put some sweetness into my life, but beside you I care for no one, no one could efface my memories. A friend I accept; I should fly from a lover. Beside, would it be a very generous thing to do, to exchange a withered heart for a young heart; to smile upon illusions which now I cannot share, to cause happiness in which I should either have no

belief, or tremble to lose? I should perhaps respond to his devotion with egoism, should weigh and deliberate while he felt; my memory would resent the poignancy of his happiness. No, if you love once, that love is never replaced, you see. Indeed, who would have my heart at this price?"

There was a tinge of heartless coquetry in the words, the last effort of discretion.

"If he loses courage, well and good, I shall live alone and faithful." The thought came from the very depths of the woman, for her it was the too slender willow twig caught in vain by a swimmer swept out by the current.

Vandenesse's involuntary shudder at her dictum pled more eloquently for him than all his past assiduity. Nothing moves a woman so much as the discovery of a gracious delicacy in us, such a refinement of sentiment as her own, for a woman the grace and delicacy are sure tokens of truth. Charles' start revealed the sincerity of his love. Mme. d'Aiglemont learned the strength of his affection from the intensity of his pain.

"Perhaps you are right," he said coldly. "New love, new vexation of spirit."

Then he changed the subject, and spoke of indifferent matters; but he was visibly moved, and he concentrated his gaze on Mme. d'Aiglemont as if he were seeing her for the last time.

"Adieu, madame," he said, with emotion in his voice.

"*Au revoir*," said she, with that subtle coquetry, the secret of a very few among women.

He made no answer and went.

When Charles was no longer there, when his empty chair spoke for him, regrets flocked in upon her, and she found fault with herself. Passion makes an immense advance as soon as a woman persuades herself that she has failed somewhat in generosity or hurt a noble nature. In love there is never any need to be on our guard against the worst in us; that is a

safeguard; a woman only surrenders at the summons of a virtue. "The floor of hell is paved with good intentions," it is no preacher's paradox.

Vandenesse stopped away for several days. Every evening at the accustomed hour the marquise sat expectant in remorseful impatience. She could not write—that would be a declaration, and, moreover, her instinct told her that he would come back. On the sixth day he was announced, and never had she heard the name with such delight. Her joy frightened her.

"You have punished me well," she said, addressing him.

Vandenesse gazed at her in astonishment.

"Punished!" he echoed. "And for what?" He understood her quite well, but he meant to be avenged for all that he had suffered as soon as she suspected it.

"Why have you not come to see me?" she demanded with a smile.

"Then have you seen no visitors?" asked he, parrying the question.

"Yes. Messieurs de Ronquerolles and de Marsay and young d'Escrignon came and stayed for nearly two hours, the first two yesterday, the last this morning. And, beside, I have had a call, I believe, from Madame Firmiani and from your sister, Madame de Listomère."

Here was a new infliction, torture which none can comprehend unless they know love as a fierce and all-invading tyrant whose mildest symptom is a monstrous jealousy, a perpetual desire to snatch away the beloved from every other influence.

"What!" thought he to himself, "she has seen visitors, she has been with happy creatures, and talking to them, while I was unhappy and all alone!"

He buried his annoyance forthwith, and consigned love to the depths of his heart, like a coffin to the sea. His thoughts were of the kind that never find expression in words; they

pass through the mind swiftly as a deadly acid, that poisons as it evaporates and vanishes. His brow, however, was overclouded; and Mme. d'Aiglemont, guided by her woman's instinct, shared his sadness without understanding it. She had hurt him, unwittingly, as Vandenesse knew. He talked over his position with her, as if his jealousy were one of those hypothetical cases which lovers love to discuss. Then the marquise understood it all. She was so deeply moved that she could not keep back the tears—and so these lovers entered the heaven of love.

Heaven and hell are two great imaginative conceptions formulating our ideas of joy and sorrow—those two poles about which human existence revolves. Is not heaven a figure of speech covering now and for evermore an infinity of human feeling impossible to express save in its accidents—since that joy is one? And what is hell but the symbol of our infinite power to suffer tortures so diverse that of our pain it is possible to fashion works of art, for no two human sorrows are alike?

One evening the two lovers sat alone and side by side, silently watching one of the fairest transformations of the sky, a cloudless heaven taking hues of pale gold and purple from the last rays of the sunset. With the slow fading of the daylight, sweet thoughts seem to awaken, and soft stirrings of passion and a mysterious sense of trouble in the midst of calm. Nature sets before us vague images of bliss, bidding us enjoy the happiness within our reach, or lament it when it has fled. In those moments fraught with enchantment, when the tender light in the canopy of the sky blends in harmony with the spells working within, it is difficult to resist the heart's desires grown so magically potent. Cares are blunted; joy becomes ecstasy; pain, intolerable anguish. The pomp of sunset gives the signal for confessions and draws them forth. Silence grows more dangerous than speech, for it gives to eyes all the power of the infinite of the heavens reflected in them. And

for speech, the least word has irresistible might. Is not the light infused into the voice and purple into the glances? Is not heaven within us, or do we feel that we are in the heavens?

Vandenesse and Julie—for so she had allowed herself to be called for the past few days by him whom she loved to speak of as Charles—Vandenesse and Julie were talking together, but they had drifted very far from their original subject; and if their spoken words had grown meaningless, they listened in delight to the unspoken thoughts that lurked in the sounds. Her hand lay in his. She had abandoned it to him without a thought that she had granted a proof of love.

Together they leaned forward to look out upon a majestic cloud country, full of snows and glaciers and fantastic mountain peaks with gray stains of shadow on their sides, a picture composed of sharp contrasts between fiery red and the shadows of darkness, filling the skies with a fleeting vision of glory which cannot be reproduced—magnificent swaddling-bands of sunrise, bright shrouds of the dying sun. As they leant, Julie's hair brushed lightly against Vandenesse's cheek. She felt that light contact, and shuddered violently, and he even more, for imperceptibly they both had reached one of those inexplicable crises when quiet has wrought upon the senses until every faculty of perception is so keen that the slightest shock fills the heart lost in melancholy with sadness that overflows in tears; or raises joy to ecstasy in a heart that is lost in the vertigo of love. Almost involuntarily Julie pressed her lover's hand. That wooing pressure gave courage to his timidity. All the joy of the present, all the hopes of the future were blended in the emotion of a first caress, the bashful trembling kiss that Mme. d'Aiglemont received upon her cheek. The slighter the concession, the more dangerous and insinuating it was. For their double misfortune it was only too sincere a revelation. Two noble natures had met and blended,* drawn

* Mêleré.

each to each by every law of natural attraction, held apart by every ordinance.

General d'Aiglemont came in at that very moment.

"The Ministry has gone out," he said. "Your uncle will be in the new cabinet. So you stand an uncommonly good chance of an embassy, Vandenesse."

Charles and Julie looked at each other and flushed red. That blush was one more tie to unite them; there was one thought and one remorse in either mind; between two lovers guilty of a kiss there is a bond quite as strong and terrible as the bond between two robbers who have murdered a man. Something had to be said by way of reply.

"I do not care to leave Paris now," Charles said.

"We know why," said the general, with the knowing air of a man who discovers a secret. "You do not like to leave your uncle, because you do not wish to lose your chance of succeeding to the title."

The marquise took refuge in her room, and in her mind passed a pitiless verdict upon her husband.

"His stupidity is really beyond anything!"

IV.

THE FINGER OF GOD.

Between the Barrière d'Italie and the Barrière de la Santé, along the boulevard which leads to the Jardin des Plantes, you have a view of Paris fit to send an artist or the tourist, the most *blasé* in matters of landscape, into ecstasies. Reach the slightly higher ground where the line of boulevard, shaded by tall, thick-spreading trees, curves with the grace of some green and silent forest avenue, and you see spread out at your feet a deep valley populous with factories looking almost countrified among green trees and the brown streams of the Bièvre or the Gobelins.

On the opposite slope, beneath some thousands of roofs packed close together like heads in a crowd, lurks the squalor of the Faubourg Saint-Marceau. The imposing cupola of the Panthéon and the grim melancholy dome of the Val-du-Grace tower proudly up above a whole town in itself, built amphitheatre-wise; every tier being grotesquely represented by a crooked line of street, so that the two public monuments look like a huge pair of giants dwarfing into insignificance the poor little houses and the tallest poplars in the valley. To your left behold the observatory, the daylight, pouring athwart its windows and galleries, producing such fantastical, strange effects that the building looks like a black spectral skeleton. Farther yet in the distance rises the elegant lantern tower of the Invalides, soaring up between the bluish pile of the Luxembourg and the gray towers of Saint-Sulpice. From this standpoint the lines of the architecture are blended with green leaves and gray shadows, and change every moment with every aspect of the heavens, every alteration of light or color in the sky. Afar, the skyey spaces themselves seem to be full of

buildings; near, wind the serpentine curves of waving trees and green footpaths.

Away to your right, through a great gap in this singular landscape, you see the canal Saint-Martin, a long pale stripe with its edging of reddish stone quays and fringes of lime avenues. The long rows of buildings beside it, in genuine Roman style, are the public granaries.

Beyond, again, on the very last plane of all, see the smoke-dimmed slopes of Belleville, covered with houses and windmills, which blend their freaks of outline with the chance effects of clouds. And still, between that horizon, vague as some childish recollection, and the serried range of roofs in the valley, a whole city lies out of sight: a huge city, ingulfed, as it were, in a vast hollow between the pinnacles of the Hôpital de la Pitié and the ridge line of the Cimetière de l'Est, between suffering on the one hand and death on the other; a city sending up a smothered roar like ocean grumbling at the foot of a cliff, as if to let you know that "I am here!"

When the sunlight pours like a flood over this strip of Paris, purifying and etherealizing the outlines, kindling answering lights here and there in the window-panes, brightening the red tiles, flaming about the golden crosses, whitening walls and transforming the atmosphere into a gauzy veil, calling up rich contrasts of light and fantastic shadow; when the sky is blue and earth quivers in the heat, and the bells are pealing, then you shall see one of the eloquent fairy scenes which stamp themselves for ever on the imagination, a scene that shall find as fanatical worshipers as the wondrous views of Naples and Byzantium or the isles of Florida. Nothing is wanting to complete the harmony, the murmur of the world of men and the idyllic quiet of solitude, the voices of a million human creatures and the voice of God. There lies a whole capital beneath the peaceful cypresses of Père-Lachaise cemetery.

The landscape lay in all its beauty, sparkling in the spring

sunlight, as I stood looking out over it one morning, my back against a huge elm-tree that flung its yellow flowers to the wind. And, at the sight of the rich and glorious view before me, I thought bitterly of the scorn with which even in our literature we affect to hold this land of ours, and poured maledictions on the pitiable plutocrats who fall out of love with fair France, and spend their gold to acquire the right of sneering at their own country, by going through Italy at a gallop and inspecting that desecrated land through an opera-glass. I cast loving eyes on modern Paris; I was beginning to dream dreams, when the sound of a kiss disturbed the solitude and put philosophy to flight. Down the sidewalk, along the steep bank, above the rippling water, I saw beyond the Pont des Gobelins the figure of a woman, dressed with the daintiest simplicity; she was still young, as it seemed to me, and the blithe gladness of the landscape was reflected in her sweet face. Her companion, a handsome young man, had just set down a little boy. A prettier child has never been seen, and to this day I do not know whether it was the little one or his mother who received the kiss. In their young faces, in their eyes, their smile, their every movement, you could read the same deep and tender thought. Their arms were interlaced with such glad swiftness; they drew close together with such marvelous unanimity of impulse that, conscious of nothing but themselves, they did not so much as see me. A second child, however—a little girl, who had turned her back upon them in sullen discontent—threw me a glance, and the expression of her eyes startled me. She was as pretty and as engaging as the little brother whom she left to run about by himself, sometimes before, sometimes after their mother and her companion; but her charm was less childless, and now, as she stood mute and motionless, her attitude and demeanor suggested a torpid snake. There was something indescribably mechanical in the way in which the pretty woman and her companion paced up and down. In absence of mind, probably, they were content

to walk to and fro between the little bridge and a carriage that stood waiting near by at a corner in the boulevard, turning, stopping short now and again, looking into each other's eyes, or breaking into laughter as their casual talk grew lively or languid, grave or gay.

I watched this delicious picture a while from my hiding-place by the great elm-tree, and should have turned away no doubt and respected their privacy, if it had not been for a chance discovery. In the face of the brooding, silent, elder child I saw traces of thought over-deep for her age. When her mother and the young man at her side turned and came near, her head was frequently lowered; the furtive sidelong glances of intelligence that she gave the pair and the child her brother were nothing less than extraordinary. Sometimes the pretty woman or her friend would stroke the little boy's fair curls, or lay a caressing finger against the baby throat or the white collar as he played at keeping step with them; and no words can describe the shrewd subtlety, the ingenuous malice, the fierce intensity which lighted up that pallid little face with the faint circles already round the eyes. Truly there was a man's power of passion in that strange-looking, delicate little girl. Here were traces of suffering or of thought in her; and which is the more certain token of death when life is in blossom—physical suffering, or the malady of too early thought preying upon a soul as yet in bud? Perhaps a mother knows For my own part, I know of nothing more dreadful to see than an old man's thoughts on a child's forehead; even blasphemy from girlish lips is less monstrous.

The almost stupid stolidity of this child who had begun to think already, her rare gestures, everything about her, interested me. I scrutinized her curiously. Then the common whim of the observer drew me to compare her with her brother, and to note their likeness and unlikeness.

Her brown hair and dark eyes and look of precocious power made a rich contrast with the little one's fair curled

head and sea-green eyes and winning helplessness. She, perhaps, was seven or eight years of age; the boy was full four years younger. Both children were dressed alike; but here again, looking closely, I noticed a difference. It was very slight, a little thing enough; but in the light of after-events I saw that it meant a whole romance in the past, a whole tragedy to come. The little brown-haired maid wore a linen collar with a plain hem, her brother's was edged with dainty embroidery, that was all; but therein lay the confession of a heart's secret, a tacit preference which a child can read in the mother's inmost soul as clearly as if the spirit of God revealed it. The fair-haired child, careless and glad, looked almost like a girl, his skin was so fair and fresh, his movements so graceful, his look so sweet; while his older sister, in spite of her energy, in spite of the beauty of her features and her dazzling complexion, looked like a sickly little boy. In her bright eyes there was none of the humid softness which lends such charm to children's faces; they seemed, like courtiers' eyes, to be dried by some inner fire; and in her pallor there was a certain swarthy olive tint, the sign of vigorous character. Twice her little brother came to her, holding out a tiny hunting-horn with a touching charm, a winning look, and wistful expression, which would have sent Charlet into ecstasies, but she only scowled in answer to his "Here, Helene, will you take it?" so persuasively spoken. The little girl, so sombre and vehement beneath her apparent indifference, shuddered and even flushed red when her brother came near her; but the little one seemed not to notice his sister's dark mood, and his unconsciousness, blended with earnestness, marked a final difference in character between the child and the little girl, whose brow was overclouded already by the gloom of a man's knowledge and cares.

"Mamma, Helene will not play," cried the little one, seizing an opportunity to complain while the two stood silent on the Pont des Gobelins.

"Let her alone, Charles; you know very well that she is always cross."

Tears sprang to Helene's eyes at the words so thoughtlessly uttered by her mother as she turned abruptly to the young man by her side. The child devoured the speech in silence, but she gave her brother one of those sagacious looks that seemed inexplicable to me, glancing with a sinister expression from the bank where he stood to the Bièvre,* then at the bridge and the view, and then at me.

I was afraid lest my presence should disturb the happy couple; I slipped away and took refuge behind a thicket of alder trees, which completely screened me from all eyes. Sitting quietly on the summit of the bank, I watched the ever-changing landscape and the fierce-looking little girl, for with my head almost on a level with the boulevard I could still see her through the leaves. Helene seemed uneasy over my disappearance, her dark eyes looked for me down the alley and behind the trees with indefinable curiosity. What was I to her? Then Charles' baby laughter rang out like a bird's song in the silence. The tall, young man, with the same fair hair, was dancing him in his arms, showering kisses upon him, and the meaningless baby words of that "little language" which rises to our lips when we play with children. The mother looked on smiling, now and then, doubtless, putting in some low word that came up from the heart, for her companion would stop short in his full happiness, and the blue eyes that turned toward her were full of glowing light and love and worship. Their voices, blending with the child's voice, reached me with a vague sense of a caress. The three figures, charming in themselves, composed a lovely scene in a glorious landscape, filling it with a pervasive unimaginable grace. A delicately fair woman, radiant with smiles, a child of love, a young man with the irresistible charm of youth, a cloudless sky; nothing was wanting in nature to complete a perfect har-

* This river was noted for its beavers, hence the name.

mony for the delight of the soul. I found myself smiling as if their happiness had been my own.

The clocks struck nine. The young man gave a tender embrace to his companion, and went toward the tilbury which an old servant drove slowly to meet him. The lady had grown grave and almost sad. The child's prattle sounded unchecked through the last farewell kisses. Then the tilbury rolled away, and the lady stood motionless, listening to the sound of the wheels, watching the little cloud of dust raised by its passage along the road. Charles ran down the green pathway back to the bridge to join his sister. I heard his silver voice calling to her.

"Why did you not come to say good-by to my good friend?" cried he.

Helene looked up. Never, surely, did such hatred gleam from a child's eyes as from hers at that moment when she turned them on the brother who stood beside her on the bank side. She gave him an angry push. Charles lost his footing on the steep slope, stumbled over the roots of a tree, and fell headlong forward, dashing his forehead on the sharp-edged stones of the embankment, and, covered with blood, disappeared over the edge into the muddy river. The turbid water closed over a fair, bright head with a shower of splashes; one sharp shriek after another rang in my ears; then the sounds were stifled by the thick stream, and the poor child sank with a dull sound as if a stone had been thrown into the water. The accident had happened with more than lightning swiftness. I sprang down the footpath, and Helene, stupefied with horror, shrieked again and again—

"Mamma! mamma!"

The mother was there at my side. She had flown to the spot like a bird. But neither a mother's eyes nor mine could find the exact place where the little one had gone under. There was a wide space of black hurrying water, and below in the bed of the Bièvre ten feet of mud. There was not the

smallest possibility of saving the child. No one is stirring at that hour on a Sunday morning, and there are neither barges nor anglers on the Bièvre. There was not a creature in sight, not a pole to plumb the filthy stream. What need was there for me to explain how the ugly-looking accident had happened—accident or misfortune, whichever it might be? Had Helene avenged her father? Her jealousy surely was the sword of God. And yet when I looked at the mother I shivered. What fearful ordeal awaited her when she should return to her husband, the judge before whom she must stand all her days? And here with her was an inseparable, incorruptible witness. A child's forehead is transparent, a child's face hides no thoughts, and a lie, like a red flame set within, glows out in red that colors even the eyes. But the unhappy woman had not thought as yet of the punishment awaiting her at home; she was staring into the Bièvre.

Such an event must inevitably send ghastly echoes through a woman's life, and here is one of the most terrible of the reverberations that troubled Julie's love from time to time.

Several years had gone by. The Marquis de Vandenesse wore mourning for his father and succeeded to his estates. One evening, therefore, after dinner it happened that a notary was present in his house. This was no pettifogging lawyer after Sterne's pattern, but a very solid, substantial notary of Paris, one of your estimable men who do a stupid thing pompously, set down a foot heavily upon your private corn, and then ask what in the world there is to cry out about? If, by accident, they come to know the full extent of the enormity: "Upon my word," cry they, "I hadn't a notion!" This was a well-intentioned ass, in short, who could see nothing in life but deeds and documents.

Mme. d'Aiglemont had been dining with M. de Vandenesse; her husband had excused himself before dinner was over, for he was taking his two children to the play. They

were to go to some boulevard theatre or other, to the Ambigu-Comique or the Gaieté, sensational melodrama being judged harmless here in Paris, and suitable pabulum for childhood, because innocence is always triumphant in the fifth act. The boy and girl had teased their father to be there before the curtain rose, so he had left the table before dessert was served.

But the notary, the imperturbable notary, utterly incapable of asking himself why Mme. d'Aiglemont should have allowed her husband and children to go without her to the play, sat on as if he were screwed to his chair. Dinner was over, dessert had been prolonged by discussion, and coffee delayed. All these things consumed time, doubtless precious, and drew impatient movements from that charming woman; she looked not unlike a thorough-bred pawing the ground before a race; but the man of law, to whom horses and women were equally unknown quantities, simply thought the marquise a very lively and sparkling personage. So enchanted was he to be in the company of a woman of fashion and a political celebrity, that he was exerting himself to shine in conversation, and, taking the lady's forced smile for approbation, talked on with unflagging spirit, till the marquise was almost out of patience.

The master of the house, in concert with the lady, had more than once maintained an eloquent silence when the lawyer expected a civil reply; but these significant pauses were employed by the talkative nuisance in looking for anecdotes in the fire. M. de Vandenesse had recourse to his watch; the charming marquise tried the experiment of fastening her bonnet strings, and made as if she would go. But she did not go, and the notary, blind and deaf, and delighted with himself, was quite convinced that his interesting conversational powers were sufficient to keep the lady on the spot.

"I shall certainly have that woman for a client," said he to himself.

Meanwhile the marquise stood, putting on her gloves,

twisting her fingers, looking from the equally impatient Marquis de Vandenesse to the lawyer, still pounding away. At every pause in the worthy man's fire of witticisms the charming pair heaved a sigh of relief, and their looks said plainly, "At last! He is really going!"

Nothing of the kind. It was a nightmare which could only end in exasperating the two impassioned creatures, on whom the lawyer had something of the fascinating effect of a snake on a pair of birds; before long they would be driven to cut him short.

The clever notary was giving them the history of the discreditable ways in which one du Tillet (a stockbroker then much in favor) had laid the foundations of his fortune; all the ins and outs of the whole disgraceful business were accurately put before them; and the narrator was in the very middle of his tale when M. de Vandenesse heard the clock strike nine. Then it became clear to him that his legal adviser was very emphatically an idiot who must be sent forthwith about his business. He stopped him resolutely with a gesture.

"The tongs, my lord marquis?" queried the notary, handing the object in question to his client.

"No, monsieur, I am compelled to send you away. Mme. d'Aiglemont wishes to join her children, and I shall have the honor of escorting her."

"Nine o'clock already! Time goes like a shadow in pleasant company," said the man of law, who had talked on end for the past hour.

He looked for his hat, planted himself before the fire, with a suppressed hiccough; and, without heeding the marquise's withering glances, spoke once more to his impatient client—

"To sum up, my lord marquis. Business before all things. To-morrow, then, we must subpœna your brother; we will proceed to make out the inventory, and faith, after that——"

So ill had the lawyer understood his instructions that his impression was the exact opposite to the one intended. It

was a delicate matter, and Vandenesse, in spite of himself, began to put the thick-headed notary right. The discussion which followed took up a certain amount of time.

"Listen," the diplomatist said at last at a sign from the lady, "you are puzzling my brains; come back to-morrow at nine o'clock, and bring my attorney with you."

"But, as I have the honor of observing, my lord marquis, we are not certain of finding Monsieur Desroches to-morrow, and if the writ is not issued by noon to-morrow, the days of grace will expire, and then——"

As he spoke, a carriage entered the courtyard. The poor woman turned sharply away at the sound to hide the tears in her eyes. The marquis rang to give the servant orders to say that he was not at home; but before the footman could answer the bell, the lady's husband reappeared. He had returned unexpectedly from the Gaieté, and held both children by the hand. The little girl's eyes were red; the boy was fretful and very cross.

"What can have happened?" asked the marquise.

"I will tell you by-and-by," said the general, and, catching a glimpse through an open door of newspapers on the table in the adjoining sitting-room, he went off. The marquise, at the end of her patience, flung herself down on the sofa in desperation. The notary, thinking it incumbent upon him to be amiable with the children, spoke to the little boy in an insinuating tone—

"Well, my little man, and what is there on at the theatre?"

"'The Valley of the Torrent,'" said Gustave sulkily.

"Upon my word and honor," declared the notary, "authors nowadays are half crazy. 'The Valley of the Torrent!' Why not the Torrent of the Valley? It is conceivable that a valley might be without a torrent in it; now if they had said the Torrent of the Valley, that would have been something clear, something precise, something definite and comprehensible. But never mind that. Now, how is a drama to take

place in a torrent and in a valley? You will tell me that in these days the principal attraction lies in the scenic effect, and the title is a capital advertisement. And did you enjoy it, my little friend?" he continued, sitting down before the child.

When the notary pursued his inquiries as to the possibilities of a drama in the bed of a torrent, the little girl turned slowly away and began to cry. Her mother did not notice this in her intense annoyance.

"Oh! yes, monsieur, I enjoyed it very much," said the child. "There was a dear little boy in the play, and he was all alone in the world, because his papa could not have been his real papa. And when he came to the top of the bridge over the torrent, a big, naughty man with a beard, dressed all in black, came and threw him into the water. And then Helene began to sob and cry, and everybody scolded us, and father brought us away quick, quick——"

M. de Vandenesse and the marquise looked on in dull amazement, as if all power to think or move had been suddenly paralyzed.

"Do be quiet, Gustave!" cried the general. "I told you that you were not to talk about anything that happened at the play, and you have forgotten what I said already."

"Oh, my lord marquis, your lordship must excuse him," cried the notary. "I ought not to have asked questions, but I had no idea——"

"He ought not to have answered them," said the general, looking sternly at the child.

It seemed that the marquise and the master of the house both perfectly understood why the children had come back so suddenly. Mme. d'Aiglemont looked at her daughter, and rose as if to go to her, but a terrible convulsion passed over her face, and all that could be read in it was relentless severity.

"That will do, Helene," she said. "Go into the other room, and leave off crying."

"What can she have done, poor child?" asked the notary, thinking to appease the mother's anger and to stop Helene's tears at one stroke. "So pretty as she is, she must be as good as can be; never anything but a joy to her mother, I will be bound. Isn't that so, my little girl?"

Helene cowered, looked at her mother, dried her eyes, struggled for composure, and took refuge in the next room.

"And you, madame, are too good a mother not to love all your children alike. You are too good a woman, beside, to have any of those lamentable preferences which have such fatal effects, as we lawyers have only too much reason to know. Society goes through our hands; we see its passions in that most revolting form—greed. Here it is the mother of a family trying to disinherit her husband's children to enrich the others whom she loves better; or it is the husband who tries to leave all his property to the child who has done his best to earn his mother's hatred. And then begin quarrels, and fears, and deeds, and defeasances, and sham sales, and trusts, and all the rest of it—a pretty mess; in fact, it is pitiable, upon my honor pitiable! There are fathers that will spend their whole lives in cheating their children and robbing their wives. Yes, robbing is the only word for it. We were talking of tragedy; oh! I can assure you of this, that if we were at liberty to tell the real reasons of some donations that I know of, our modern dramatists would have the material for some sensational bourgeois dramas. How the wife manages to get her way, as she invariably does, I cannot think; for, in spite of appearances and in spite of their weakness, it is always the women who carry the day. Ah! by the way, they don't take *me* in. I always know the reason at the bottom of those predilections which the world politely styles 'unaccountable.' But in justice to the husbands, I must say that *they* never discover anything. You will tell me that this is a merciful dispens——"

Helene had come back to the drawing-room with her father,

and was listening attentively. So well did she understand all that was said that she gave her mother a frightened glance, feeling, with a child's quick instinct, that these remarks would aggravate the punishment hanging over her. The marquise turned her white face to Vandenesse ; and, with terror in her eyes, indicated her husband, who stood with his eyes fixed absently on the flower pattern of the carpet. The diplomatist, accomplished man of the world though he was, could no longer contain his wrath, he gave the man of law a withering glance.

"Step this way, sir," he said, and he went hurriedly to the door of the antechamber ; the notary left his sentence half finished, and followed, quaking, and the husband and wife were left together.

"Now, sir," said the Marquis de Vandenesse—he banged the drawing-room door and spoke with concentrated rage—"ever since dinner you have done nothing but make blunders and talk folly. For heaven's sake, go. You will make the most frightful mischief before you have done. If you are a clever man in your profession, keep to your profession ; and if by any chance you should go into society, endeavor to be more circumspect."

With that he went back to the drawing-room, and did not even wish the notary good-evening. For a moment that worthy stood dumfounded, bewildered, utterly at a loss. Then, when the buzzing in his ears subsided, he thought he heard some one moaning in the next room. Footsteps came and went, and bells were violently rung. He was by no means anxious to meet the marquis again, and found the use of his legs to make good his escape, only to run against a hurrying crowd of servants at the door.

"Just the way with all these grand folk," said he to himself outside in the street as he looked about for a cab. "They lead you on to talk with compliments, and you think you are amusing them. Not a bit of it. They treat you in-

solently; put you at a distance; even put you out at the door without scruple. After all, I talked very cleverly, I said nothing but what was sensible, well turned, and discreet; and, upon my word, he advises me to be more circumspect in future. I will take good care of that! Eh! the mischief take it! I am a notary and a member of my chamber! Pshaw! it was an ambassador's fit of temper, nothing is sacred for people of that kind. To-morrow he shall explain what he meant by saying that I had done nothing but blunder and talk nonsense in his house. I will ask him for an explanation—that is, I will ask him to explain my mistake. After all is done and said, I am in the wrong perhaps—— Upon my word, it is very good of me to cudgel my brains like this. What business is it of mine?"

So the notary went home and laid the enigma before his spouse, with a complete account of the evening's events related in sequence.

And she replied: "My dear Crottat, his excellency was perfectly right when he said that you had done nothing but blunder and talk folly."

"Why?"

"My dear, if I told you why, it would not prevent you from doing the same thing somewhere else to-morrow. I tell you again—talk of nothing but business when you go out; that is my advice to you."

"If you will not tell me, I shall ask him to-morrow."

"Why, dear me! the veriest noodle is careful to hide a thing of that kind, and do you suppose that an ambassador will tell you about it? Really, Crottat, I have never known you so utterly devoid of commonsense."

"Thank you, my dear."

V.

TWO MEETINGS.

One of Napoleon's orderly staff-officers, who shall be known in this history only as the general or the marquis, had come to spend the spring at Versailles. He had made a large fortune under the Restoration; and, as his place at Court would not allow him to go very far from Paris, he had taken a country house between the church and the barrier of Montreuil, on the road that leads to the Avenue de Saint-Cloud.

The house had been built originally as a retreat for the short-lived loves of some great lord. The grounds were large; the gardens on either side extending from the first houses of Montreuil to the thatched cottages near the barrier, so that the owner could enjoy all the pleasures of solitude with the city almost at his gates. By an odd piece of contradiction, the whole front of the house itself, with the principal entrance, gave directly upon the street. Perhaps in time past it was a tolerably lonely road, and indeed this theory looks all the more probable when one comes to think of it; for not so very far away, on this same road, Louis Quinze built a delicious summer villa for Mlle. de Romans, and the curious in such things will discover that the wayside *casinos* (summer-houses) are adorned in a style that recalls traditions of the ingenious taste displayed in debauchery by our ancestors who, with all the license laid to their charge, sought to invest it with secrecy and mystery.

One winter evening the family were by themselves in the lonely house. The servants had received permission to go to Versailles to celebrate the wedding of one of their number. It was Christmas-time, and the holiday makers, presuming upon the double festival, did not scruple to outstay their leave

of absence; yet, as the general was well known to be a man of his word, the culprits felt some twinges of conscience as they danced on after the hour of return. The clocks struck eleven, and still there was no sign of the servants.

A deep silence prevailed over the countryside, broken only by the sound of the northeast wind whistling through the black branches, wailing about the house, dying in gusts along the corridors. The hard frost had purified the air, and held the earth in its grip; the roads gave back every sound with the hard metallic ring which always strikes us with a new surprise; the heavy footsteps of some belated reveler, or a cab returning to Paris, could be heard for a long distance with unwonted distinctness. Out in the courtyard a few dead leaves set a-dancing by some eddying gust found a voice for the night which fain had been silent. It was, in fact, one of those sharp, frosty evenings that wring barren expressions of pity from our selfish ease for wayfarers and the poor, and fills us with a luxurious sense of the comfort of the fireside.

But the family party in the salon at that hour gave not a thought to absent servants nor houseless folk, nor to the gracious charm with which a winter evening sparkles. No one played the philosopher out of season. Secure in the protection of an old soldier, women and children gave themselves up to the joys of home life, so delicious when there is no restraint upon feeling; and talk and play and glances are bright with frankness and affection.

The general sat, or more properly speaking, lay buried, in the depths of a huge, high-back armchair by the hearth. The heaped-up fire burnt scorchingly clear with the excessive cold of the night. The good father leaned his head slightly to one side against the back of the chair, in the indolence of perfect serenity and a glow of happiness. The languid, half-sleepy droop of his outstretched arms seemed to complete his expression of placid content. He was watching his youngest, a boy of five or thereabout, who, half-clad as he was, declined

to allow his mother to undress him. The little one fled from the night-gown and cap with which he was threatened now and again, and stoutly declined to part with his embroidered collar, laughing when his mother called to him, for he saw that she, too, was laughing at this declaration of infant independence. The next step was to go back to a game of romps with his sister. She was as much a child as he, but more mischievous; and she was older by two years, and could speak distinctly already, whereas his inarticulate words and confused ideas were a puzzle even to his parents. Little Moïna's playfulness, somewhat coquettish already, provoked inextinguishable laughter, explosions of merriment which went off like fireworks for no apparent cause. As they tumbled about before the fire, unconcernedly displaying little plump bodies and delicate white contours, as the dark and golden curls mingled in a collision of rosy cheeks dimpled with childish glee, a father surely, a mother most certainly, must have understood those little souls, and seen the character and power of passion already developed before their eyes. As the cherubs frolicked about, struggling, rolling, and tumbling without fear of hurt on the soft carpet, its flowers looked pale beside the glowing white and red of their cheeks and the brilliant color of their shining eyes.

On the sofa by the fire, opposite the great armchair, the children's mother sat among a heap of scattered garments, with a little scarlet shoe in her hand. She seemed to have given herself up completely to the enjoyment of the moment; wavering discipline had relaxed into a sweet smile engraved upon her lips. At the age of six-and-thirty, or thereabout, she was a beautiful woman still, by reason of the rare perfection of the outlines of her face, and at this moment light and warmth and happiness filled it with preternatural brightness.

Again and again her eyes wandered from her children, and their tender gaze was turned upon her husband's grave face;

and now and again the eyes of husband and wife met with a silent exchange of happiness and thoughts from some inner depth.

The general's face was deeply bronzed, a stray lock of gray hair scored shadows on his forehead. The reckless courage of the battlefield could be read in the lines carved in his hollow cheeks, and gleams of rugged strength in the blue eyes; clearly the bit of red ribbon flaunting at his button-hole had been paid for by hardship and toil. An inexpressible kindliness and frankness shone out of the strong, resolute face which reflected his children's merriment; the gray-haired captain found it not so very hard to become a child again. Is there not always a love of little children in the heart of a soldier who has seen enough of the seamy-side of life to know something of the piteous limitations of strength and the privileges of weakness?

At a round table rather farther away, in a circle of bright lamplight that dimmed the feebler illumination of the wax candles on the mantel, sat a boy of thirteen, rapidly turning the pages of a thick volume which he was reading, undisturbed by the shouts of the children. There was a boy's curiosity in his face. From his *lycéens* uniform he was evidently a schoolboy, and the book he was reading was the "Arabian Nights." Small wonder that he was deeply absorbed. He sat perfectly still in a meditative attitude, with an elbow on the table, and his hand propping his head—the white fingers contrasting strongly with the brown hair into which they were thrust. As he sat, with the light turned full upon his face, and the rest of his body in shadow, he looked like one of Raphael's dark portraits of himself—a bent head and intent eyes filled with visions of the future.

Between the table and the marquise a tall, beautiful girl sat at her tapestry frame; sometimes she drew back from her work, sometimes she bent over it, and her hair, picturesque in its ebony smoothness and darkness, caught the light of the

lamp. Helene was a picture in herself. In her beauty there was a rare distinctive character of power and refinement. Though her hair was gathered up and drawn back from her face, so as to trace a clearly marked line about her head, so thick and abundant was it, so recalcitrant to the comb, that it sprang back in curl-tendrils to the nape of her neck. The bountiful line of eyebrows was evenly marked out in dark contrasting outline upon her pure forehead. On her upper lip beneath the Grecian nose with its sensitively perfect curve of nostril, there lay a faint, swarthy shadow, the sign-manual of courage; but the enchanting roundness of contour, the frankly innocent expression of her other features, the transparence of the delicate carnations, the voluptuous softness of the lips, the flawless oval of the outline of the face, and with these, and more than all these, the saintlike expression in the girlish eyes, gave to her vigorous loveliness the distinctive touch of feminine grace, that enchanting modesty which we look for in these angels of peace and love. Yet there was no suggestion of fragility about her; and, surely, with so grand a woman's frame, so attractive a face, she must possess a corresponding warmth of heart and strength of soul.

She was as silent as her schoolboy brother. Seemingly a prey to the fateful maiden meditations which baffle a father's penetration and even a mother's sagacity, it was impossible to be certain whether it was the lamplight that cast those shadows that flitted over her face like thin clouds over a bright sky, or whether they were passing shades of secret and painful thoughts.

Husband and wife had quite forgotten the two older children at that moment, though now and again the general's questioning glance traveled to that second mute picture; a larger growth, a gracious realization, as it were, of the hopes embodied in the baby forms rioting in the foreground. Their faces made up a kind of living poem, illustrating life's various phases. The luxurious background of the salon, the different

attitudes, the strong contrasts of coloring in the faces, differing with the character of differing ages, the modeling of the forms brought into high relief by the light—altogether it was a page of human life, richly illuminated beyond the art of painter, sculptor, or poet. Silence, solitude, night, and winter lent a final touch of majesty to complete the simplicity and sublimity of this exquisite effect of nature's contriving. Married life is full of these sacred hours, which perhaps owe their indefinable charm to some vague memory of a better world. A divine radiance surely shines upon them, the destined compensation for some portion of earth's sorrows, the solace which enables man to accept life. We seem to behold a vision of an enchanted universe, the great conception of its system widens out before our eyes, and social life pleads for its laws by bidding us look to the future.

Yet in spite of the tender glances that Helene gave Abel and Moïna after a fresh outburst of merriment; in spite of the look of gladness in her transparent face whenever she stole a glance at her father, a deep melancholy pervaded her gestures, her attitude, and, more than all, her eyes veiled by their long lashes. Those white, strong hands, through which the light passed, tinting them with a diaphanous almost fluid red—those hands were trembling. Once only did the eyes of the mother and daughter clash without shrinking, and the two women read each other's thoughts in a look, cold, wan, and respectful on Helene's part, sombre and threatening on her mother's. At once Helene's eyes were lowered to her work, she plied her needle swiftly, and it was long before she raised her head, bowed as it seemed by a weight of thought too heavy to bear. Was the marquise over-harsh with this one of her children? Did she think this harshness needful? Was she jealous of Helene's beauty? She might still hope to rival Helene, but only by the magic arts of the toilet. Or, again, had her daughter, like many a girl who reaches the clairvoyant age, read the secrets which this wife (to all ap-

pearance so religiously faithful in the fulfillment of her duties) believed to be buried in her own heart as deeply as in a grave?

Helene had reached an age when purity of soul inclines to pass over-rigid judgments. A certain order of mind is apt to exaggerate transgression into crime; imagination reacts upon conscience, and a young girl is a hard judge because she magnifies the seriousness of the offense. Helene seemed to think herself worthy of no one. Perhaps there was a secret in her past life, perhaps something had happened, unintelligible to her at the time, but with gradually developing significance for a mind grown susceptible to religious influences; something which lately seemed to have degraded her, as it were, in her own eyes and according to her own romantic standard. This change in her demeanor dated from the day of reading Schiller's noble tragedy of "William Tell" in a series of translations. Her mother scolded her for letting the book fall, and then remarked to herself that the passage which had so worked on Helene's feelings was the scene in which William Tell, who spilt the blood of a tyrant to save a nation, fraternizes in some sort with John the Parricide. Helene had grown humble, dutiful, and self-contained; she no longer cared for gayety. Never had she made so much of her father, especially when the marquise was not by to watch her girlish caresses. And yet, if Helene's affection for her mother had cooled at all, the change in her manner was so slight as to be almost imperceptible; so slight that the general could not have noticed it, jealous though he might be of the harmony of home. No masculine insight could have sounded the depths of those two feminine natures; the one was young and generous, the other sensitive and proud; the first had a wealth of indulgence in her nature, the second was full of craft and love. If the marquise made her daughter's life a burden to her by a woman's subtle tyranny, it was a tyranny invisible to all but the victim; and, for the rest, these con-

jectures only called forth after the event must remain conjectures. Until this night no accusing flash of light had escaped either of them, but an ominous mystery was too surely growing up between them, a mystery known only to themselves and God.

"Come, Abel," called the marquise, seizing on her opportunity when the children were tired of play and still for a moment. "Come, come, my child; you must be put to bed——"

And with a glance that must be obeyed, she caught him up and took him on her knee.

"What!" exclaimed the general. "Half-past ten o'clock, and not one of the servants has come back! The rascals! Gustave," he added, turning to his son, "I allowed you to read that book only on the condition that you should put it away at ten o'clock. You ought to have shut up the book at the proper time and gone to bed, as you promised. If you mean to make your mark in the world, you must keep your word; let it be a second religion to you and a point of honor. Fox, one of the greatest of English orators, was remarkable, above all things, for the beauty of his character, and the very first of his qualities was the scrupulous faithfulness with which he kept his engagements. When he was a child, his father (an Englishman of the old school) gave him a pretty strong lesson which he never forgot. Like most rich Englishmen, Fox's father had a country house and a considerable park about it. Now, in the park there was an old summer-house, and orders had been given that this summer-house was to be pulled down and put up somewhere else where there was a finer view. Fox was just about your age, and had come home for the holidays. Boys are fond of seeing things pulled to pieces, so young Fox asked to stay on at home for a few days longer to see the old summer-house taken down; but his father said that he must go back to school on the proper day, so there was anger between father and son. Fox's mother

(like all mammas) took the boy's part. Then the father solemnly promised that the summer-house should stay where it was till the next holidays.

"So Fox went back to school; and his father, thinking that lessons would soon drive the whole thing out of the boy's mind, had the summer-house pulled down and put up in the new position. But, as it happened, the persistent youngster thought of nothing but that summer-house; and as soon as he came home again, his first care was to go out to look at the old building, and he came in to breakfast looking quite doleful, and said to his father: 'You have broken your promise.' The old English gentleman said with confusion full of dignity, 'That is true, my boy; but I will make amends. A man ought to think of keeping his word before he thinks of his fortune; for by keeping to his word he will gain fortune, while all the fortunes in the world will not efface the stain left on your conscience by a breach of faith.' Then he gave orders that the summer-house should be put up again in the old place, and when it had been rebuilt he had it taken down again for his son to see. Let this be a lesson to *you*, Gustave."

Gustave had been listening with interest, and now he closed the book at once. There was a moment's silence, while the general took possession of Moïna, who could scarcely keep her eyes open. The little one's languid head fell back on her father's breast, and in a moment she was fast asleep, wrapped round about in her golden curls.

Just then a sound of hurrying footsteps rang on the pavement out in the street, immediately followed by three knocks on the street-door, waking the echoes of the house. The reverberating blows told, as plainly as a cry for help, that here was a man flying for his life. The house dog barked furiously. A thrill of excitement ran through Helene and Gustave and the general and his wife; but neither Abel, with the night-cap strings just tied under his chin, nor Moïna awoke.

"The fellow is in a hurry!" exclaimed the general. He

put the little girl down on the chair and hastened out of the room, heedless of his wife's entreating cry: "Dear, do not go down——"

He stepped into his own room for a pair of pistols, lighted a dark lantern, sprang at lightning speed down the staircase, and in another minute reached the house-door, his oldest boy fearlessly following.

"Who is there?" demanded he.

"Let me in," panted a breathless voice.

"Are you a friend?"

"Yes, friend."

"Are you alone?"

"Yes! But let me in; *they* are after me!"

The general had scarcely set the door ajar before a man slipped into the porch with the uncanny swiftness of a shadow. Before the master of the house could prevent him, the intruder had closed the door with a well-directed kick, and set his back against it resolutely, as if he were determined that it should not be opened again. In a moment the general had his lantern and pistol at a level with the stranger's breast, and beheld a man of medium height in a fur-lined pelisse. It was an old man's garment, both too large and too long for its present wearer. Chance or caution had slouched the man's hat over his eyes.

"You can lower your pistol, sir," said this person. "I do not claim to stay in your house against your will; but if I leave it, death is waiting for me at the barrier. And what a death! You would be answerable to God for it! I ask for your hospitality for two hours. And bear this in mind, sir, that, suppliant as I am, I have a right to command with the despotism of necessity. I want the Arab's hospitality. Either I and my secret must be inviolable, or open the door and I will go to my death. I want secrecy, a safe hiding-place, and water. Oh! water!" he cried again, with a rattle in his throat.

"Who are you?" demanded the general, taken aback by the stranger's feverish volubility.

"Ah! who am I? Good, open the door, and I will put a distance between us," retorted the other, and there was a diabolical irony in his tone.

Dexterously as the marquis passed the light of the lantern over the man's face, he could only see the lower half of it, and that in nowise prepossessed him in favor of this singular claimant of hospitality. The cheeks were livid and quivering, the features dreadfully contorted. Under the shadow of the hat-brim a pair of eyes gleamed out like flames; the feeble candlelight looked almost dim in comparison. Some sort of answer must be made however.

"Your language, sir, is so extraordinary that in my place you yourself——"

"My life is in your hands!" the intruder broke in. The sound of his voice was dreadful to hear.

"Two hours?" said the marquis wavering.

"Two hours," echoed the other.

Then quite suddenly, with a desperate gesture, he pushed back his hat and left his forehead bare, and, as if he meant to try a final expedient, he gave the general a glance that seemed to plunge like a vivid flash into his very soul. That electrical discharge of intelligence and will was swift as lightning and crushing as a thunderbolt; for there are moments when a human being is invested for a brief space with inexplicable power.

"Come, whoever you may be, you shall be in safety under my roof," the master of the house said gravely at last, acting, as he imagined, upon one of those intuitions which a man cannot always explain to himself.

"God will repay you!" said the stranger, with a deep, involuntary sigh.

"Have you weapons?" asked the general.

For all answer the stranger flung open his fur pelisse,

and scarcely gave the other time for a glance before he wrapped it about him again. To all appearance he was unarmed and in evening dress. Swift as the soldier's scrutiny had been, he saw something, however, which made him exclaim—

"Where the devil have you been to get yourself in such a mess in such dry weather?"

"More questions!" said the stranger haughtily.

At the words the marquis caught sight of his son, and his own late homily on the strict fulfillment of a given word came up in his mind. In lively vexation, he exclaimed, not without a touch of anger—

"What! little rogue, you here when you ought to be in bed?"

"Because I thought I might be some good in danger," answered Gustave.

"There, go up to your room," said his father, mollified by the reply. "And you" (addressing the stranger), "come with me."

The two men grew as silent as a pair of gamblers who watch each other's play with mutual suspicions. The general himself began to be troubled with ugly presentiments. The strange visit weighed upon his mind already like a nightmare; but he had passed his word, there was no help for it now, and he led the way along the passages and stairways till they reached a large room on the third floor immediately above the salon. This was an empty room where linen was dried in the winter. It had but the one door, and for all decoration boasted one solitary, shabby looking-glass above the mantel, left by the previous owner, and a great pier-glass, placed provisionally opposite the fireplace until such time as a use should be found for it in the rooms below. The four yellowish walls were bare. The floor had never been swept. The huge attic was icy-cold, and the furniture consisted of a couple of rickety straw-bottomed chairs, or rather frames of chairs.

The general set the lantern down upon the mantel. Then he spoke:

"It is necessary for your own safety to hide you in this comfortless attic. And, as you have my promise to keep your secret, you will permit me to lock you in."

The other bent his head in acquiescence.

"I asked for nothing but a hiding-place, secrecy, and water," returned he.

"I will bring you some directly," said the marquis, shutting the door cautiously. He groped his way down into the salon for a lamp before going to the kitchen to look for a carafe.

"Well, what is it?" the marquise asked quickly.

"Nothing, dear," he returned coolly.

"But we listened, and we certainly heard you go upstairs with somebody."

"Helene," said the general, and he looked at his daughter, who raised her face, "bear in mind that your father's honor depends upon your discretion. You must have heard nothing."

The girl bent her head in answer. The marquise was confused and smarting inwardly at the way in which her husband had thought fit to silence her.

Meanwhile the general went for the bottle and a tumbler, and returned to the room above. His prisoner was leaning against the mantel, his head was bare, he had flung down his hat on one of the two chairs. Evidently he had not expected to have so bright a light turned upon him, and he frowned and looked anxious as he met the general's keen eyes; but his face softened and wore a gracious expression as he thanked his protector. When the latter placed the bottle and glass on the mantel-shelf, the stranger's eyes flashed out on him again; and when he spoke, it was in musical tones with no sign of the previous guttural convulsion, though his voice was still unsteady with repressed emotion.

"I shall seem to you to be a strange being, sir, but you must pardon the caprices of necessity. If you propose to re-

main in the room, I beg that you will not look at me while I am drinking."

Vexed at this continual obedience to a man whom he disliked, the general sharply turned his back upon him. The stranger thereupon drew a white handkerchief from his pocket and wound it about his right hand. Then he seized the carafe and emptied it at a draught. The marquis, staring vacantly into the tall mirror across the room, without a thought of breaking his implicit promise, saw the stranger's figure distinctly reflected by the opposite looking-glass, and saw, too, a red stain suddenly appear through the folds of the white bandage—the man's hands were steeped in blood.

"Ah! you saw me!" cried the other. He had drunk off the water and wrapped himself again in his cloak, and now scrutinized the general suspiciously. "It is all over with me! Here they come!"

"I don't hear anything," said the marquis.

"You have not the same interest that I have in listening for sounds in the air."

"You have been fighting a duel, I suppose, to be in such a state?" queried the general, not a little disturbed by the color of those broad, dark patches staining his visitor's shabby cloak.

"Yes, a duel; you have it," said the other, and a bitter smile flitted over his lips.

As he spoke a sound rang along the distant road, a sound of galloping horses; but so faint as yet that it was the merest dawn of a sound. The general's trained ear recognized the advance of a troop of regulars.

"That is the gendarmerie," said he.

He glanced at his prisoner to reassure him after his own involuntary indiscretion, took the lamp, and went down to the salon. He had scarcely laid the key of the room above upon the mantel when the hoof-beats sounded louder and came swiftly nearer and nearer the house. The general felt a shiver

of excitement, and indeed the horses stopped at the house-door; a few words were exchanged among the men, and one of them dismounted and knocked loudly. There was no help for it; the general went to open the door. He could scarcely conceal his inward perturbation at the sight of half a dozen gendarmes outside, the metal rims of their caps gleaming like silver in the moonlight.

"My lord," said the corporal, "have you heard a man run past toward the barrier within the last few minutes?"

"Toward the barrier? No."

"Have you opened the door to any one?"

"Now, am I in the habit of answering the door myself, what——?"

"I ask your pardon, general, but just now it seems to me that——"

"Really!" cried the marquis wrathfully. "Have you a mind to try joking with me? What right have you——?"

"None at all, none at all, my lord," cried the corporal, hastily putting in a soft answer. "You will excuse our zeal. We know, of course, that a peer of France is not likely to harbor a murderer at this time of night; but as we want any information we can get——"

"A murderer!" cried the general. "Who, then, can have been——"

"Monsieur le Baron de Mauny has just been murdered. It was a blow from an axe, and we are in hot pursuit of the criminal. We know for certain that he is somewhere in this neighborhood, and we shall hunt him down. By your leave, general," and the man swung himself into the saddle as he spoke. It was well that he did so, for a corporal of gendarmerie trained to alert observation and quick surmise would have had his suspicions at once if he had caught sight of the general's face. Everything that passed through the soldier's mind was faithfully revealed in his frank countenance.

"Is it known whom the murderer is?" asked he.

"No," said the other, now in the saddle. "He left the bureau full of bank-notes and gold untouched."

"It was revenge, then," said the marquis.

"On an old man? pshaw! No, no, the fellow hadn't time to take it, that was all," and the corporal galloped after his comrades, who were almost out of sight by this time.

For a few minutes the general stood, a victim to perplexities which need no explanation; but in a moment he heard the servants returning home, their voices were raised in some sort of dispute at the cross-roads of Montreuil. When they came in he gave vent to his feelings in an explosion of rage, his wrath fell upon them like a thunderbolt, and all the echoes of the house trembled at the sound of his voice. In the midst of the storm his own man, the boldest and cleverest of the party, brought out an excuse; they had been stopped, he said, by the gendarmerie at the gate of Montreuil, a murder had been committed, and the police were in pursuit. In a moment the general's anger vanished, he said not another word; then, bethinking himself of his own singular position, drily ordered them all off to bed at once, and left them amazed at his readiness to accept their fellow-servant's lying excuse.

While these incidents took place in the yard, an apparently trifling occurrence had changed the relative positions of three characters in this story. The marquis had scarcely left the room before his wife looked first toward the key on the mantel-shelf and then at Helene, and, after some wavering, bent toward her daughter and said in a low voice, "Helene, your father has left the key on the mantel."

The girl looked up in surprise and glanced timidly at her mother. The marquise's eyes sparkled with curiosity.

"Well, mamma?" she said, and her voice had a troubled ring.

"I should like to know what is going on upstairs. If there is anybody up there, he has not stirred yet. Just go quietly up——"

"*I?*" cried the girl, with something like horror in her tones.

"Are you afraid?"

"No, mamma, but I thought I heard a man's footsteps," she answered.

"If I could go myself, I should not have asked you to go, Helene," said her mother with cold dignity. "If your father were to come back and did not see me, he would go to look for me, perhaps, but he would not notice your absence."

"Madame, if you bid me go, I will go," said Helene, "but I shall lose my father's good opinion——"

"What is this?" cried the marquise in a sarcastic tone. "But, since you take a thing that was said in joke in earnest, I now *order* you to go upstairs and see whom it is in the room above. Here is the key, child. When your father told you to say nothing about this thing that happened, he did not forbid you to go up to the room. Go at once—and learn that a daughter ought never to judge her mother."

The last words were spoken with all the severity of a justly offended mother. The marquise took the key and handed it to Helene, who rose without a word and left the room.

"My mother can always easily obtain her pardon," thought the girl; "but as for me, my father will never think the same of me again. Does she mean to rob me of his tenderness? Does she want to turn me out of his house?"

These were the thoughts that set her imagination in a sudden ferment, as she went down the dark passage to the mysterious door at the end. When she stood before it, her mental confusion grew to a fearful pitch. Feelings hitherto forced down into inner depths crowded up at the summons of these confused thoughts. Perhaps hitherto she had never believed that a happy life lay before her, but now, in this awful moment, her despair was complete. She shook convulsively as she set the key in the lock; so great, indeed, was her agitation that she stopped for a moment and laid her hand on her

heart, as if to still the heavy throbs that sounded in her ears. Then she opened the door.

The creaking of the hinges sounded doubtless in vain on the murderer's ears. Acute as were his powers of hearing, he stood as if lost in thought, and so motionless that he might have been glued to the wall against which he leaned. In the circle of semi-opaque darkness, dimly lit by the bull's-eye lantern, he looked like the shadowy figure of some dead knight, standing for ever in his shadowy mortuary niche in the gloom of some Gothic chapel. Drops of cold sweat trickled over the broad, sallow forehead. An incredible fearlessness looked out from every tense feature. His eyes of fire were fixed and tearless; he seemed to be watching some struggle in the darkness beyond him. Stormy thoughts passed swiftly across a face whose firm decision spoke of a character of no common order. His whole person, bearing, and frame bore out the impression of a tameless spirit. The man looked power and strength personified; he stood facing the darkness as if it were the visible image of his own future.

These physical characteristics had made no impression upon the general, familiar as he was with the powerful faces of the group of giants gathered about Napoleon; speculative curiosity, moreover, as to the why and wherefore of the apparition had completely filled his mind; but Helene, with feminine sensitiveness to surface impressions, was struck by the blended chaos of light and darkness, grandeur and passion, suggesting a likeness between this stranger and Lucifer recovering from his fall. Suddenly the storm apparent in his face was stilled as if by magic; and the indefinable power to sway which the stranger exercised upon others, and perhaps unconsciously and as by reflex action upon himself, spread its influence about him with the progressive swiftness of a flood. A torrent of thought rolled away from his brow as his face resumed its ordinary expression. Perhaps it was the strangeness of this meeting, or perhaps it was the mystery into which she had

HE TURNED HIS HEAD TOWARD HIS HOST'S DAUGHTER

penetrated, that held the young girl spellbound in the doorway, so that she could look at a face pleasant to behold and full of interest. For some moments she stood in the magical silence; a trouble had come upon her never known before in her young life. Perhaps some exclamation broke from Helene, perhaps she moved unconsciously; or it may be that the hunted criminal returned of his own accord from the world of ideas to the material world and heard some one breathing in the room; however it was, he turned his head toward his host's daughter and saw dimly in the shadow a noble face and queenly form, which he must have taken for an angel's, so motionless she stood, so vague and like a spirit.

"Monsieur——" a trembling voice cried.

The murderer trembled.

"A woman!" he cried under his breath. "Is it possible? Go," he cried; "I deny that any one has a right to pity, to absolve, or condemn me. I must live alone. Go, my child," he added, with an imperious gesture; "I should ill requite the service done me by the master of the house if I were to allow a single creature under his roof to breathe the same air with me. I must submit to be judged by the laws of the world."

The last words were uttered in a lower voice. Even as he realized with a profound intuition all the manifold misery awakened by that melancholy thought, the glance that he gave Helene had something of the power of the serpent, stirring a whole dormant world in the mind of the strange girl before him. To her that glance was like a light revealing unknown lands. She was stricken with strange trouble, helpless, quelled by a magnetic power exerted unconsciously. Trembling and ashamed, she went out and returned to the salon. She had scarcely entered the room before her father came back, so that she had not time to say a word to her mother.

The general was wholly absorbed in thought. He folded his arms, and paced silently to and fro between the windows

which looked out upon the street and the second row which gave upon the garden. His wife held the sleeping Abel on her knee, and little Moïna lay in untroubled slumber in the low chair, like a bird in its nest. Her elder sister stared into the fire, a skein of silk in one hand, a needle in the other.

Deep silence prevailed, broken only by lagging footsteps on the stairs, as one by one the servants crept away to bed; there was an occasional burst of stifled laughter, a last echo of the wedding festivity, or doors were opened as they still talked among themselves, then shut. A smothered sound came now and again from the bedrooms, a chair fell, the old coachman coughed feebly, then all was silent.

In a little while the dark majesty with which sleeping earth is invested at midnight brought all things under its sway. No lights shone but the light of the stars. The frost gripped the ground. There was not a sound of a voice, nor a living creature stirring. The crackling of the fire only seemed to make the depth of the silence more fully felt.

The church clock of Montreuil had just struck one, when an almost inaudible sound of a light footstep came from the second flight of stairs. The marquis and his daughter, both believing that M. de Mauny's murderer was a prisoner above, thought that one of the maids had come down, and no one was at all surprised to hear the door open in the antechamber. Quite suddenly the murderer appeared in their midst. The marquis himself was sunk in deep musings, the mother and daughter were silent, the one from keen curiosity, the other from sheer astonishment, so that the visitor was almost half-way across the room when he spoke to the general.

"Sir, the two hours are almost over," he said, in a voice that was strangely calm and musical.

"*You here!*" cried the general. "By what means——?" and he gave wife and daughter a formidable questioning glance. Helene grew red as fire.

"You!" he went on, in a tone filled with horror. "*You* among us! A murderer covered with blood! You are a blot on this picture! Go, go out!" he added in a burst of rage.

At that word "murderer," the marquise cried out; as for Helene, it seemed to mark an epoch in her life, there was not a trace of surprise in her face. She looked as if she had been waiting for this—for him. Those so vast thoughts of hers had found a meaning. The punishment reserved by heaven for her sins flamed out before her. In her own eyes she was as great a criminal as this murderer; she confronted him with her quiet gaze; she was his fellow, his sister. It seemed to her that in this accident the command of God had been made manifest. If she had been a few years older, reason would have disposed of her remorse, but at this moment she was like one distraught.

The stranger stood impassive and self-possessed; a scornful smile overspread his features and his thick, red lips were curled ironically.

"You appreciate the magnanimity of my behavior very badly," he said slowly. "I would not touch with my fingers the glass of water you brought me to allay my thirst; I did not so much as think of washing my blood-stained hands under your roof; I am going away, leaving nothing of *my crime*" (here his lips were compressed) "but the memory; I have tried to leave no trace of my presence in this house. Indeed, I would not even allow your daughter to——"

"*My daughter!*" cried the general, with a horror-stricken glance at Helene. "Vile wretch, go, or I will kill you——"

"The two hours are not yet over," said the other; "if you kill me or give me up, you must lower yourself in your own eyes—and in mine."

At these last words, the general turned to stare at the criminal in dumb amazement; but he could not endure the intolerable light in those eyes which for the second time disorganized

his being. He was afraid of showing weakness once more, conscious as he was that his will was weaker already.

"An old man! You can never have seen a family," he said, with a father's glance at his wife and children.

"Yes, an old man," echoed the stranger, frowning slightly.

"Fly!" cried the general, but he did not dare to look at his guest. "Our compact is broken. I shall not kill you. No! I will never be purveyor to the scaffold. But go out. You make us shudder."

"I know that," said the other patiently. "There is not a spot on French soil where I can set foot and be safe; but if man's justice, like God's, took all into account, if man's justice deigned to inquire which was the monster—the murderer or his victim—then I might hold up my head among my fellows. Can you not guess that other crimes preceded that blow from an axe? I constituted myself his judge and executioner; I stepped in where man's justice failed. That was my crime. Farewell, sir. Bitter though you have made your hospitality, I shall not forget it. I shall always bear in my heart a feeling of gratitude toward one man in the world, and you are that man. But I could wish that you had showed yourself more generous!"

He turned toward the door, but in the same instant Helene leaned to whisper something in her mother's ear.

"Ah!"

At the cry that broke from his wife, the general trembled as if he had seen Moïna lying dead. There stood Helene, and the murderer had turned instinctively, with something like anxiety about these folk in his face.

"What is it, dear?" asked the general.

"Helene wants to go with him."

The murderer's face flushed.

"If that is how my mother understands an almost involuntary exclamation," Helene said in a low voice, "I will fulfill her wishes." She glanced about her with something like

fierce pride; then the girl's eyes fell, and she stood, admirable in her modesty.

"Helene, did you go up to the room where——?"

"Yes, father."

"Helene" (and his voice shook with a convulsive tremor), "is this the first time that you have seen this man?"

"Yes, father."

"Then it is not natural that you should intend to——"

"If it is not natural, father, at any rate it is true."

"Oh! child," said the marquise, lowering her voice, but not so much but that her husband could hear her, "you are false to all the principles of honor, modesty, and right which I have tried to cultivate in your heart. If until this fatal hour your life has only been one lie, there is nothing to regret in your loss. It can hardly be the moral perfection of this stranger that attracts you to him? Can it be the kind of power that commits crime? I have too good an opinion of you to suppose that——"

"Oh, suppose everything, madame," Helene said coldly.

But though her force of character sustained this ordeal, her flashing eyes could scarcely hold the tears that filled them. The stranger, watching her, guessed the mother's language from the girl's tears, and turned his eagle glance upon the marquise. An irresistible power constrained her to look at this terrible seducer; but as her eyes met his bright, glittering gaze, she felt a shiver run through her frame, such a shock as we feel at the sight of a reptile or the contact of a Leyden jar.

"Dear!" she cried, turning to her husband, "this is the Fiend himself! He can divine everything!"

The general rose to his feet and went to the bell.

"He means ruin for you," Helene said to the murderer.

The stranger smiled, took one forward stride, grasped the general's arm, and compelled him to endure a steady gaze which benumbed the soldier's brain and left him powerless.

"I will repay you now for your hospitality," he said, "and then we shall be quits. I will spare you the shame by giving myself up. After all, what should I do now with my life?"

"You could repent," answered Helene, and her glance conveyed such hope as only glows in a young girl's eyes.

"*I shall never repent,*" said the murderer in a sonorous voice, as he raised his head proudly.

"His hands are stained with blood," the father said.

"I will wipe it away," she answered.

"But do you so much as know whether he cares for you?" said her father, not daring now to look at the stranger.

The murderer came up a little nearer. Some light within seemed to glow through Helene's beauty, grave and maidenly though it was, coloring and bringing into relief, as it were, the least details, the most delicate lines in her face. The stranger, with that terrible fire still blazing in his eyes, gave one tender glance to her enchanting loveliness, then he spoke, his tones revealing how deeply he had been moved.

"And if I refuse to allow this sacrifice of yourself, and so discharge my debt of two hours of existence to your father; is not this love, love for yourself alone?"

"Then do you too reject me?" Helene's cry rang painfully through the hearts of all who heard her. "Farewell, then, to you all; I will die."

"What does this mean?" asked the father and mother.

Helene gave her mother an eloquent glance and lowered her eyes.

Since the first attempt made by the general and his wife to contest by word or action the intruder's strange presumption to the right of staying in their midst, from their first experience of the power of those glittering eyes, a mysterious torpor had crept over them, and their benumbed faculties struggled in vain with a preternatural influence. The air seemed to have suddenly grown so heavy that they could scarcely breathe; yet, while they could not find the reason of this

feeling of oppression, a voice within told them that this magnetic presence was the real cause of their helplessness. In this moral agony, it flashed across the general that he must make every effort to overcome this influence on his daughter's reeling brain; he caught her by the waist and drew her into the embrasure of a window, as far as possible from the murderer.

"Darling," he murmured, "if some wild love has been suddenly born in your heart, I cannot believe that you have not the strength of soul to quell the mad impulse; your innocent life, your pure and dutiful soul, has given me too many proofs of your character. There must be something behind all this. Well, this heart of mine is full of indulgence, you can tell everything to me; even if it breaks, dear child, I can be silent about my grief, and keep your confession a secret. What is it? Are you jealous of our love for your brothers or your little sister? Is it some love trouble? Are you unhappy here at home? Tell me about it, tell me the reasons that urge you to leave your home, to rob it of its greatest charm, to leave your mother and brothers and your little sister?"

"I am in love with no one, father, and jealous of no one, not even of your friend the diplomatist, Monsieur de Vandenesse."

The marquise turned pale; her daughter saw this, and stopped short.

"Sooner or later I must live under some man's protection, must I not?"

"That is true."

"Do we ever know," she went on, "the human being to whom we link our destinies? Now, I believe in this man."

"Oh, child," said the general, raising his voice, "you have no idea of all the misery that lies in store for you."

"I am thinking of *his*."

"What a life!" groaned the father.

"A woman's life," the girl murmured.

"You have a great knowledge of life!" exclaimed the marquise, finding speech at last.

"Madame, my answers are shaped by the questions; but if you desire it, I will speak more clearly."

"Speak out, my child—— I am a mother."

Mother and daughter looked each other in the face, and the marquise said no more. At last she said—

"Helene, if you have any reproaches to make, I would rather bear them than see you go away with a man from whom the whole world shrinks in horror."

"Then you see yourself, madame, that but for me he would be quite alone."

"That will do, madame," the general cried; "we have but one daughter left to us now," and he looked at Moïna, who slept on. "As for you," he added, turning to Helene, "I will put you in a convent."

"So be it, father," she said, in calm despair, "I shall die there. You are answerable to God alone for my life and for *his* soul."

A deep, sudden silence fell after those words. The onlookers during this strange scene, so utterly at variance with all the sentiments of ordinary life, shunned each other's eloquent eyes.

Suddenly the marquis happened to glance at his pistols. He caught up one of them, cocked the weapon, and pointed it at the intruder. At the click of firearms the other turned his piercing gaze full upon the general; the soldier's arm slackened indescribably and fell heavily to his side. The pistol dropped to the floor.

"Girl, you are free," said he, exhausted by this ghastly struggle. "Kiss your mother, if she will let you kiss her. For my own part, I wish never to see nor to hear of you again."

"Helene," the mother began, "only think of the wretched life before you."

A sort of rattling sound came from the intruder's deep chest, all eyes turned to him. Disdain was plainly visible in his face.

The general rose to his feet. "My hospitality has cost me dear," he cried. "Before you came you had taken an old man's life; now you are dealing a deadly blow at a whole family. Whatever happens, there must be unhappiness in this house."

"And if your daughter is happy?" asked the other, gazing steadily at the general.

The father made a superhuman effort for self-control. "If she is happy with you," he said, "she is not worth regretting."

Helene knelt timidly before her father.

"Father, I love and revere you," she said, "whether you lavish all the treasures of your kindness upon me or make me feel to the full the rigor of disgrace. But I entreat that your last words of farewell shall not be words of anger."

The general could not trust himself to look at her. The stranger came nearer; there was something half-diabolical, half-divine in the smile that he gave Helene.

"Angel of pity, you that do not shrink in horror from a murderer, come, since you persist in your resolution of intrusting your life to me."

"Inconceivable!" cried her father.

The marquise looked strangely at her daughter, opened her arms, and Helene fled to her in tears.

"Farewell," she said; "farewell, mother!" The stranger trembled as Helene, undaunted, made sign to him that she was ready. She kissed her father's hand; and, as if performing a duty, gave a hasty kiss to Moïna and little Abel, then she vanished with the murderer.

"Which way are they going?" exclaimed the general, listening to the footsteps of the two fugitives. "Madame," he turned to his wife, "I think I must be dreaming; there is

some mystery behind all this, I do not understand it; you must know what it means."

The marquise shivered.

"For some time past your daughter has grown extraordinarily romantic and strangely high-flown in her ideas. In spite of the pains I have taken to combat these tendencies in her character——"

"This will not do——" began the general; but fancying that he heard footsteps in the garden, he broke off to fling open the window.

"Helene!" he shouted.

His voice was lost in the darkness like a vain prophecy. The utterance of that name, to which there should never be answer any more, acted like a counter-spell; it broke the charm and set him free from the evil enchantment which lay upon him. It was as if some spirit passed over his face. He now saw clearly what had taken place, and cursed his incomprehensible weakness. A shiver of heat rushed from his heart to his head and feet; he became himself once more, terrible, thirsting for revenge. He raised a dreadful cry.

"Help!" he thundered; "help!"

He rushed to the bell-pull, pulled till the bells rang with a strange clamor of din, pulled till the cord gave way. The whole house was roused with a start. Still shouting, he flung open the windows that looked upon the street, called for the police, caught up his pistols, and fired them off to hurry the mounted patrols, the newly aroused servants, and the neighbors. The dogs barked at the sound of their master's voice; the horses neighed and stamped in their stalls. The quiet night was suddenly filled with hideous uproar. The general on the staircase, in pursuit of his daughter, saw the scared faces of the servants flocking from all parts of the house.

"My daughter!" he shouted. "Helene has been carried off. Search the garden! Keep a lookout on the road! Open the gates for the gendarmerie! Murder! Help!"

With the strength of fury he snapped the chain and let loose the great house-dog.

"Helene!" he cried; "Helene!"

The dog sprang out like a lion, barking furiously, and dashed into the garden, leaving the general far behind. A troop of horse came along the road at a gallop, and he flew to open the gates himself.

"Corporal!" he shouted, "cut off the retreat of Monsieur de Mauny's murderer. They have gone through my garden. Quick! Put a cordon of men to watch the ways by the Butte de Picardie. I will beat up the grounds, parks, and houses. The rest of you keep a lookout along the road," he ordered the servants; "form a chain between the barrier and Versailles. Forward, every man of you!"

He caught up the rifle which his man had brought out, and dashed into the garden.

"Find them!" he called to the dog.

An ominous baying came in answer from the distance, and he plunged in the direction from which the growl seemed to come.

It was seven o'clock in the morning; all the search made by gendarmes, servants, and neighbors had been fruitless, and the dog had not come back. The general entered the salon, empty now for him though the other three children were there; he was worn out with fatigue, and looked old already with that night's work.

"You have been very cold to your daughter," he said, turning his eyes on his wife. "And now this is all that is left to us of her," he added, indicating the embroidery frame, and the flower just begun. "Only just now she was there, and now she is lost—— lost!"

Tears followed; he hid his face in his hands, and for a few minutes he said no more; he could not bear the sight of the room, which so short a time ago had made a setting to a picture of the sweetest family happiness. The winter dawn was

struggling with the dying lamplight; the tapers burned down to their paper-wreaths and flared out; everything was all in keeping with the father's despair.

"This must be destroyed," he said after a pause, pointing to the tambour-frame. "I shall never bear to see anything again that reminds us of *her!*"

The terrible Christmas night when the marquis and his wife lost their oldest daughter, powerless to oppose the mysterious influence exercised by the man who involuntarily, as it were, stole Helene from them, was like a warning sent by Fate. The marquis was ruined by the failure of his stockbroker; he borrowed money on his wife's property, and lost it in the endeavor to retrieve his fortunes. Driven to desperate expedients, he left France. Six years went by. His family seldom had news of him; but a few days before Spain recognized the independence of the American Republics, he wrote that he was coming home.

So, one fine morning, it happened that several French merchants were on board a Spanish brig that lay a few leagues out from Bordeaux, impatient to reach their native land again, with wealth acquired by long years of toil and perilous adventures in Venezuela and Mexico.

One of the passengers, a man who looked aged by trouble rather than by years, was leaning against the bulwark netting, apparently quite unaffected by the sight to be seen from the upper deck. The bright day, the sense that the voyage was safely over, had brought all the passengers above to greet their native land. The larger number of them insisted that they could see, far off in the distance, the houses and lighthouses on the coast of Gascony and the Tower of Cordouan, melting into the fantastic erections of white cloud along the horizon. But for the silver fringe that played about their bows and the long furrow swiftly effaced in their wake, they might have been perfectly still in mid-ocean, so calm was the sea. The sky was magically clear, the dark blue of the vault above

paled by imperceptible gradations, until it blended with the bluish water, a gleaming line that sparkled like stars marking the dividing line of sea. The sunlight caught myriads of facets over the wide surface of the ocean, in such a sort that the vast plain of salt water looked perhaps more full of light than the fields of sky.

The brig had set all her canvas. The snowy sails, swelled by the strangely soft wind, the labyrinth of cordage, and the yellow flags flying at the masthead, all stood out sharp and uncompromisingly clear against the vivid background of space, sky, and sea; there was nothing to alter the color but the shadow cast by the great cloudlike sails.

A glorious day, a fair wind, and the fatherland in sight, a sea like a mill-pond, the melancholy sound of the ripples, a fair solitary vessel, gliding across the surface of the water like a woman stealing out to a tryst—it was a picture full of harmony. That mere speck full of movement was a starting-point whence the soul of man could descry the immutable vastness of space. Solitude and bustling life, silence and sound, were all brought together in strange abrupt contrast; you could not tell where life, or sound, or silence, and nothingness lay, and no human voice broke the divine spell.

The Spanish captain, the crew, and the French passengers sat or stood in a mood of devout ecstasy, in which many memories blended. There was idleness in the air. The beaming faces told of complete forgetfulness of past hardships, the men were rocked on the fair vessel as in a golden dream. Yet, from time to time the elderly passenger, leaning over the bulwark nettings, looked with something like uneasiness at the horizon. Distrust of the ways of Fate could be read in his whole face; he seemed to fear that he should not reach the coast of France in time. This was the marquis. Fortune had not been deaf to his despairing cry and struggles. After five years of endeavor and painful toil, he was a wealthy man once more. In his impatience to reach his home again and

to bring the good news to his family, he had followed the example set by some French merchants in Havana, and embarked with them on a Spanish vessel with a cargo for Bordeaux. And now, grown tired of evil forebodings, his fancy was tracing out for him the most delicious pictures of past happiness. In that far-off brown line of land he seemed to see his wife and children. He sat in his place by the fireside; they were crowding about him; he felt their caresses. Moïna had grown to be young girl; she was beautiful, and tall, and striking. The fancied picture had grown almost real, when the tears filled his eyes, and, to hide his emotion, he turned his face toward the sea-line, opposite the hazy streak that meant land.

"There she is again—— She is following us!" he said.

"What?" cried the Spanish captain.

"There is a vessel," muttered the general.

"I saw her yesterday," answered Captain Gomez. He looked at his interlocutor as if to ask what he thought; then he added, in the general's ear, "She has been chasing us all along."

"Then why she has not come up with us, I do not know," said the general, "for she is a faster sailer than your damned Saint-Ferdinand."

"She will have damaged herself, sprung a leak——"

"She is gaining on us!" the general broke in.

"She is a Colombian privateer," the captain said in his ear, "and we are still six leagues from land, and the wind is dropping."

"She is not *going* ahead, she is flying, as if she knew that in two hours' time her prey would escape her. What audacity!"

"Audacity!" cried the captain. "Oh! she is not called the Othello for nothing. Not so long back she sank a Spanish frigate that carried thirty guns! This is the one thing I was afraid of, for I had a notion that she was cruising about some-

where off the Antilles. Aha!" he added after a pause, as he watched the sails of his own vessel, "the wind is rising; we are making away. Get through we must, for 'the Parisian' will show us no mercy."

"She is making way, too!" returned the general.

The Othello was scarce three leagues away by this time; and although the conversation between the marquis and Captain Gomez had taken place apart, passengers and crew, attracted by the sudden appearance of a sail, came to that side of the vessel. With scarcely an exception, however, they took the privateer for a merchantman, and watched her course with interest, till at once a sailor shouted with some energy of language—

"By Saint-Jacques, it is all up with us! Yonder is the Parisian captain!"

At that terrible name dismay, and a panic impossible to describe, spread through the brig. The Spanish captain's orders put energy into the crew for a while; and in his resolute determination to make land at all costs, he set all the studding sails and crowded on every stitch of canvas on board. But all this was not the work of a moment; and naturally the men did not work together with that wonderful unanimity so fascinating to watch on board a man-of-war. The Othello meanwhile, thanks to the trimming of her sails, flew over the water like a swallow; but she was making, to all appearance, so little headway, that the unlucky Frenchman began to entertain sweet delusive hopes. At last, after unheard-of efforts, the Saint-Ferdinand sprang forward, Gomez himself directing the shifting of the sheets with voice and gesture, when all at once the man at the tiller, steering at random (purposely, no doubt), swung the vessel round. The wind striking athwart the beam, the sails shivered so unexpectedly that the brig heeled to one side, the booms were carried away, and the vessel was completely out of hand. The captain's face grew whiter than his sails with unutterable

rage. He sprang upon the man at the tiller, drove his dagger at him in such blind fury, that he missed him, and hurled the weapon overboard. Gomez took the helm himself, and strove to right the gallant vessel. Tears of despair rose to his eyes, for it is harder to lose the result of our carefully laid plans through treachery than to face imminent death. But the more the captain swore, the less the men worked, and it was he himself who fired the alarm-gun, hoping to be heard on shore. The privateer, now gaining hopelessly upon them, replied with a cannon-shot, which struck the water ten fathoms away from the Saint-Ferdinand.

"Thunder of heaven!" cried the general, "that was a close shave! They must have guns made on purpose."

"Oh! when that one yonder speaks, look you, you have to hold your tongue," said a sailor. "The Parisian would not be afraid to meet an English man-of-war."

"It is all over with us," the captain cried in desperation; he had pointed his telescope landward, and saw not a sign from the shore. "We are further from the coast than I thought."

"Why do you despair?" asked the general. "All your passengers are Frenchmen; they have chartered your vessel. The privateer is a Parisian, you say? Well and good, run up the white flag, and——"

"And he would run us down," retorted the captain. "He can be anything he likes when he has a mind to seize on a rich booty!"

"Oh! if he is a pirate——"

"Pirate!" said the ferocious-looking sailor. "Oh! he always has the law on his side, or he knows how to be on the same side as the law."

"Very well," said the general, raising his eyes, "let us make up our minds to it," and his remaining fortitude was still sufficient to keep back the tears.

The words were hardly out of his mouth before a second

cannon-shot, better aimed came crashing through the hull of the Saint-Ferdinand.

"Heave to!" cried the captain gloomily.

The sailor who had commended the Parisian's law-abiding proclivities showed himself a clever hand at working a ship after this desperate order was given. The crew waited for half an hour in an agony of suspense and the deepest dismay. The Saint-Ferdinand had four millions of piastres on board, the whole fortunes of the five passengers, and the general's eleven hundred thousand francs. At length the Othello lay not ten gunshots away, so that those on the Saint-Ferdinand could look into the muzzles of her loaded guns. The vessel seemed to be borne along by a breeze sent by the devil himself, but the eyes of an expert would have discovered the secret of her speed at once. You had but to look for a moment at the rake of her stern, her long, narrow keel, her tall masts, to see the cut of her sails, the wonderful lightness of her rigging, and the ease and perfect seamanship with which her crew trimmed her sails to the wind. Everything about her gave the impression of the security of power in this delicately curved inanimate creature, swift and intelligent as a greyhound or some bird of prey. The privateer crew stood silent, ready in case of resistance to shatter the wretched merchantman, which, luckily for her, remained motionless, like a schoolboy caught in the act of doing wrong by a master.

"We have guns on board!" cried the general, clutching the Spanish captain's hand. But the courage in Gomez's eyes was the courage of despair.

"Have we men?" he said.

The marquis looked round at the crew of the Saint Ferdinand, and a cold chill ran through him. There stood the four merchants, pale and quaking for fear, while the crew gathered about some of their own number who appeared to be arranging to go over in a body to the enemy. They watched the Othello with greed and curiosity on their faces. The cap-

tain, the marquis, and the mate exchanged glances; they were the only three who had a thought for any but themselves.

"Ah! Captain Gomez, when I left my home and country, my heart was half dead with the bitterness of parting, and now must I bid it good-by once more when I am bringing back happiness and ease for my children?"

The general turned his head away toward the sea with tears of rage in his eyes—and saw the steersman swimming out to the privateer.

"This time it will be good-by for good," said the captain by way of answer, and the dazed look in the Spaniard's eyes startled the Frenchman.

By this time the two vessels were almost alongside, and at the first sight of the enemy's crew the general saw that Gomez's gloomy prophecy was only too true. The three men at each gun might have been bronze statues, standing like athletes, with their rugged features, their bare, sinewy arms, strong men whom Death himself had scarcely thrown off their feet.

The rest of the crew, well armed, active, light, and vigorous, also stood motionless. Toil had hardened and the sun had deeply tanned those energetic faces; their eyes glittered like sparks of fire with infernal glee and clear-sighted courage. Perfect silence on the upper deck, now black with men, bore abundant testimony to the rigorous discipline and strong will which held these fiends incarnate in check.

The captain of the Othello stood with folded arms at the foot of the mainmast; he carried no weapons, but an axe lay on the deck beside him. His face was hidden by the shadow of a broad, felt hat. The men looked like dogs crouching before their master. Gunners, soldiers, and ship's crew turned their eyes first on his face and then on the merchant vessel.

The two brigs came up alongside, and the shock of contact

roused the privateer captain from his musings; he spoke a word in the ear of the lieutenant who stood beside him.

"Grappling irons!" shouted the latter, and the Othello grappled the Saint-Ferdinand with miraculous quickness. The captain of the privateer gave his orders in a low voice to the lieutenant, who repeated them; the men, told off in succession for each duty, went on the upper deck of the Saint-Ferdinand, like seminarists going to mass. They bound crew and passengers hand and foot and seized the booty. In the twinkling of an eye, provisions and barrels full of piastres were transferred to the Othello; the general thought that he must be dreaming when he himself, likewise bound, was flung down on a bale of goods as if he had been part of the cargo.

A brief conference took place between the captain of the privateer and his lieutenant and a sailor, who seemed to be the mate of the vessel; then the mate gave a whistle, and the men jumped on board the Saint-Ferdinand and completely dismantled her with the nimble dexterity of a soldier who strips a dead comrade of a coveted overcoat and shoes.

"It is all over with us," said the Spanish captain coolly. He had eyed the three chiefs during their confabulation, and saw that the sailors were proceeding to pull his vessel to pieces.

"Why so?" asked the general.

"What would you have them do with us?" returned the Spaniard. "They have just come to the conclusion that they will scarcely sell the Saint-Ferdinand in any French or Spanish port, so they are going to sink her to be rid of her. And as for us, do you suppose that they will put themselves to the expense of feeding us, when they don't know what port they are to put into?"

The words were scarcely out of the captain's mouth before a hideous outcry went up, followed by a dull splashing sound, as several bodies were thrown overboard. He turned, the four merchants were no longer to be seen, but eight ferocious-

looking gunners were still standing with their arms raised above their heads. He shuddered.

"What did I tell you?" the Spanish captain asked very coolly.

The marquis rose to his feet with a spring. The surface of the sea was quite smooth again; he could not so much as see the place where his unhappy fellow-passengers had disappeared. By this time they were sinking down, bound hand and foot, below the waves, if, indeed, the fish had not devoured them already.

Only a few paces away, the treacherous steersman and the sailor who had boasted of the Parisian's power were fraternizing with the crew of the Othello, and pointing out those among their own number who, in their opinion, were worthy to join the crew of the privateer. Then the boys tied the rest together by the feet in spite of frightful oaths. It was soon over; the eight gunners seized the doomed men and flung them overboard without more ado, watching the different ways in which the drowning victims met their death, their contortions, their last agony, with a sort of malignant curiosity, but with no sign of amusement, surprise, or pity. For them it was an ordinary event to which seemingly they were quite accustomed. The older men looked instead with grim, set smiles at the casks of piastres about the mainmast.

The general and Captain Gomez, left seated on a bale of goods, consulted each other with well-nigh hopeless looks; they were, in a sense, the sole survivors of the Saint-Ferdinand, for the seven men pointed out by the spies were transformed amid rejoicings into Peruvians.

"What atrocious villains!" the general cried. Loyal and generous indignation silenced prudence and pain on his own account.

"They do it because they must," Captain Gomez answered coolly. "If you came across one of those fellows, you would run him through the body, would you not?"

The lieutenant now came up to the Spaniard.

"Captain," said he, "the Parisian has heard of you. He says that you are the only man who really knows the passages of the Antilles and the Brazilian coast. Will you——"

The captain cut him sort with a scornful exclamation.

"I shall die like a sailor," he said, "and a loyal Spaniard and a Christian. Do you hear?"

"Heave him overboard," shouted the lieutenant, and a couple of gunners seized on Gomez.

"You cowards!" roared the general, seizing hold of the men.

"Don't get too excited, old boy," said the lieutenant. "If your red ribbon has made some impression upon our captain, I myself do not care a rap for it. You and I will have our little bit of talk together directly."

A smothered sound, with no accompanying cry, told the general that the gallant captain had died "like a sailor," as he had said.

"My money or death!" cried the marquis, in a fit of rage terrible to see.

"Ah! now you talk sensibly!" sneered the lieutenant. "That is the way to get something out of us——"

Two of the men came up at a sign and hastened to bind the Frenchman's feet, but with unlooked-for boldness he snatched the lieutenant's cutlass and laid about him like a cavalry officer who knows his business.

"Brigands that you are! You shall not chuck one of Napoleon's old troopers over a ship's side like an oyster!"

At the sound of pistol-shots fired point-blank at the Frenchman, "the Parisian" looked round from his occupation of superintending the transfer of the rigging from the Saint-Ferdinand. He came up behind the brave general, seized him, dragged him to the side, and was about to fling him over with no more concern than if the man had been a broken spar. They were at the very edge when the general

looked into the tawny eyes of the man who had stolen his daughter. The recognition was mutual.

The captain of the privateer, his arm still upraised, suddenly swung it in the contrary direction as if his victim was but a feather weight, and set him down at the foot of the main-mast. A murmur rose on the upper deck, but the captain glanced round, and there was a sudden silence.

"This is Helene's father," said the captain in a clear, firm voice. "Woe to any one who meddles with him!"

A hurrah of joy went up at the words, a shout rising to the sky like a prayer of the church; a cry like the first high-notes of the *Te Deum*. The lads swung aloft in the rigging, the men below flung up their caps, the gunners pounded away on the deck, there was a general thrill of excitement, an outburst of oaths, yells, and shrill cries in voluble chorus. The men cheered like fanatics, the general's misgivings deepened, and he grew uneasy; it seemed to him that there was some horrible mystery in such wild transports.

"My daughter!" he cried, as soon as he could speak. "Where is my daughter?"

For all answer, the captain of the privateer gave him a searching glance, one of those glances which throw the bravest men into a confusion which no theory can explain. The general was mute, not a little to the satisfaction of the crew; it pleased them to see their leader exercise the strange power which he possessed over all with whom he came in contact. Then the captain led the way down a staircase and flung open the door of a cabin.

"There she is," he said, and disappeared, leaving the general in a stupor of bewilderment at the scene before his eyes.

Helene cried out at the sight of him, and sprang up from the sofa on which she was lying when the door flew open. So changed was she that none but a father's eyes could have recognized her. The sun of the tropics had brought warmer

tones into the once pale face, and something of Oriental charm with that wonderful coloring; there was a certain grandeur about her, a majestic firmness, a profound sentiment which impresses itself upon the coarsest nature. Her long, thick hair, falling in large curls about her queenly throat, gave an added idea of power to the proud face. The consciousness of that power shone out from every movement, every line of Helene's form. The rose-tinted nostrils were dilated slightly with the joy of triumph; the serene happiness of her life had left its plain tokens in the full development of her beauty. A certain indefinable virginal grace met in her with the pride of a woman who is loved. This was a slave and a queen, a queen who would fain obey that she might reign.

Her dress was magnificent and elegant in its richness; India muslin was the sole material, but her sofa and cushions were of cashmere. A Persian carpet covered the floor in the large cabin, and her four children playing at her feet were building castles of gems and pearl necklaces and jewels of price. The air was full of the scent of rare flowers in Sèvres porcelain vases painted by Mme. Jacotot; tiny South American birds, like living rubies, sapphires, and gold, hovered among the Mexican jessamines and camellias. A pianforte had been fitted into the room, and here and there on the paneled walls, covered with red silk, hung small pictures by great painters—a Sunset by Hippolyte Schinner beside a Terburg, one of Raphael's Madonnas scarcely yielded in charm to a sketch by Géricault, while a Gerard Dow eclipsed the painters of the Empire. On a lacquered table stood a golden plate full of delicious fruit. Indeed, Helene might have been the sovereign lady of some great country, and this cabin of hers a boudoir in which her crowned lover had brought together all earth's treasures to please his consort. The children gazed with bright, keen eyes at their grandfather. Accustomed as they were to a life of battle, storm, and tumult, they recalled

the Roman children in David's Brutus, watching the fighting and bloodshed with curious interest.

"What! is it possible?" cried Helene, catching her father's arm as if to assure herself that this was no vision.

"Helene!"

"Father!"

They fell into each other's arms, and the old man's embrace was not so close and warm as Helene's.

"Were you on board that vessel?"

"Yes," he answered sadly, and looking at the little ones, who gathered about him and gazed with wide-open eyes.

"I was about to perish, but——"

"But for my husband," she broke in. "I see how it was."

"Ah!" cried the general, "why must I find you again like this, Helene? After all the many tears that I have shed, must I still groan for your fate?"

"And why?" she asked smiling. "Why should you be sorry to learn that I am the happiest woman under the sun?"

"*Happy?*" he cried, with a start of surprise.

"Yes, happy, my kind father," and she caught his hands in hers and covered them with kisses, and pressed them to her throbbing heart. Her caresses and a something in the carriage of her head were interpreted yet more plainly by the joy sparkling in her eyes.

"And how is this?" he asked, wondering at his daughter's life, forgetful now of everything but the bright glowing face before him.

"Listen, father, I have for lover, husband, servant, and master one whose soul is as great as the boundless sea, as infinite in his kindness as heaven, a god on earth! Never during these seven years has a chance look, or word, or gesture jarred in the divine harmony of his talk, his love, his caresses. His eyes have never met mine without a gleam of happiness in them; there has always been a bright smile on his lips for me. On deck, his voice rises above the thunder

of storms and the tumult of battle; but here below it is soft and melodious as Rossini's music—for he has Rossini's music sent for me. I have everything that woman's caprice can imagine. My wishes are more than fulfilled. In short, I am a queen on the seas; I am obeyed here as perhaps a queen may be obeyed. Ah!" she cried, interrupting herself, "*happy* did I say? Happiness is no word to express such bliss as mine. All the happiness that should have fallen to all the women in the world has been my share. Knowing one's own great love and self-devotion, to find in *his* heart an infinite love in which a woman's soul is lost, and lost for ever —tell me, is this happiness? I have lived through a thousand lives even now. Here, I am alone; here I command. No other woman has set foot on this noble vessel, and Victor is never more than a few paces distant from me, he cannot wander further from me than from stern to prow," she added, with a shade of mischief in her manner. "Seven years! A love that outlasts seven years of continual joy, that endures all the tests brought by all the moments that make up seven years—is this love? Oh, no, no! it is something better than all that I know of life —— human language fails to express the bliss of heaven."

A sudden torrent of tears fell from her burning eyes. The four little ones raised a piteous cry at this, and flocked like chickens about their mother. The oldest boy struck the general with a threatening look.

"Abel, darling," said Helene, "I am crying for joy."

Helene took him on her knee, and the child fondled her, putting his arms about her queenly neck, as a lion's whelp might play with the lioness.

"Do you never weary of your life?" asked the general, bewildered by his daughter's enthusiastic language.

"Yes," she said, "sometimes, when we are on land, yet even then I have never parted from my husband."

"But you used to be fond of music and balls and fêtes."

"His voice is music for me; and for fêtes, I devise new toilets for him to see. When he likes my dress, it is as if all the world admired me. Simply for that reason I keep the diamonds and jewels, the precious things, the flowers and masterpieces of art that he heaps upon me, saying, 'Helene, as you live out of the world, I will have the world come to you.' But for that I would fling them all overboard."

"But there are others on board, wild, reckless men, whose passions——"

"I understand, father," she said, smiling. "Do not fear for me. Never was empress encompassed with more observance than I. The men are very superstitious; they look upon me as a sort of tutelary genius, the luck of the vessel. But *he* is their god; they worship him. Once, and once only, one of the crew showed disrespect, mere words," she added, laughing; "but before Victor knew of it, the others flung the offender overboard, although I forgave him. They love me as their good angel; I nurse them when they are ill; several times I have been so fortunate as to save a life, by constant care such as a woman can give. Poor fellows, they are giants, but they are children at the same time."

"And when there is fighting overhead?"

"I am used to it now; I quaked for fear during the first engagement, but never since. I am used to such peril, and—I am your daughter," she said; "I love it."

"But how if he should fall?"

"I should die with him."

"And your children?"

"They are children of the sea and of danger; they share the life of their parents. We have but one life, and we do not flinch from it. We have but the one life, our names are written on the same page of the book of Fate, one skiff bears us and our fortunes, and we know it."

"Do you so love him that he is more to you than all beside?"

"All beside?" echoed she. "Let us leave that mystery alone. Yet stay! there is this dear little one—well, this too is *he*," and straining Abel to her in a tight clasp, she set eager kisses on his cheeks and hair.

"But I can never forget that he has just drowned nine men!" exclaimed the general.

"There was no help for it, doubtless," she said, "for he is generous and humane. He sheds as little blood as may be, and only in the interests of the little world which he defends and the sacred cause for which he is fighting. Talk to him about anything that seems to you to be wrong, and he will convince you, you will see."

"There was that crime of his," muttered the general to himself.

"But how if that crime was a virtue?" she asked, with cold dignity. "How if man's justice had failed to avenge a great wrong?"

"But a private revenge!" exclaimed her father.

"But what is hell," she cried, "but a revenge through all eternity for the wrong done in a little day?"

"Ah! you are lost! He has bewitched and perverted you. You are talking wildly."

"Stay with us one day, father, and if you will but listen to him, and see him, you will love him."

"Helene, France lies only a few leagues away," he said gravely.

Helene trembled; then she went over to the port-hole and pointed to the savannas of green water spreading far and wide before them.

"There lies my country," she said, tapping the carpet with her foot.

"But are you not coming with me to see your mother and your sister and brothers?"

"Oh! yes," she cried, with tears in her voice, "if *he* is willing, if he will come with me."

"So," the general said sternly, "you have neither country nor kin now, Helene?"

"I am his wife," she answered proudly, and there was something very noble in her tone. "This is the first happiness in seven years that has not come to me through him," she said—then, as she caught her father's hand and kissed it—"and this is the first word of reproach that I have heard."

"And your conscience?"

"My conscience; he is my conscience!" she cried, trembling from head to foot. "Here he is! Even in the thick of a fight I can tell his footstep among all the others on deck," she cried.

A sudden crimson flushed her cheeks and glowed in her features, her eyes lighted up, her complexion changed to velvet whiteness; there was joy and love in every fibre, in the blue veins, in the unconscious trembling of her whole frame. That quiver of the sensitive plant softened the general.

It was as she had said. The captain came in, sat down in an easy-chair, took up his oldest boy, and began to play with him. There was a moment's silence, for the general's deep musing had grown vague and dreamy, and the daintily furnished cabin and the playing children seemed like a nest of halcyons, floating on the waves, between sky and sea, safe in the protection of this man who steered his way amid perils of war and tempest, as other heads of households guide those in their care among the hazards of common life. He gazed admiringly at Helene—a dreamlike vision of some sea goddess, gracious in her loveliness, rich in happiness; all the treasures about her grown poor in comparison with the wealth of her nature, paling before the brightness of her eyes, the indefinable romance expressed in her and her surroundings.

The strangeness of the situation took the general by surprise; the ideas of ordinary life were thrown into confusion by this lofty passion and reasoning. Chill and narrow social conventions faded away before this picture. All these things

the old soldier felt, and saw no less how impossible it was that his daughter should give up so wide a life, a life so variously rich, filled to the full with such passionate love. And Helene had tasted danger without shrinking; how could she return to the petty stage, the superficial circumscribed life of society?

It was the captain who broke the silence at last.

"Am I in the way?" he asked, looking at his wife.

"No," said the general, answering for her. "Helene has told me all. I see that she is lost to us——"

"No," the captain put in quickly; "in a few years' time the statute of limitations will allow me to go back to France. When the conscience is clear, and a man has broken the law in obedience to——" he stopped short, as if scorning to justify himself.

"How can you commit new murders, such as I have seen with my own eyes, without remorse?"

"We had no provisions," the privateer captain retorted calmly.

"But if you had set the men ashore——"

"They would have given the alarm and sent a man-of-war after us, and we should never have seen Chili [Peru] again."

"Before France would have given warning to the Spanish admiralty——" began the general.

"But France might take it amiss that a man, with a warrant still out against him, should seize a brig chartered by Bordeaux merchants. And for that matter, have you never fired a shot or so too many in battle?"

The general shrank under the other's eyes. He said no more, and his daughter looked at him half-sadly, half-triumphantly.

"General," the privateer continued, in a deep voice, "I have made it a rule to abstract nothing from booty. But even so, my share will, beyond a doubt, be far larger than your fortune. Permit me to return it to you in another form——"

He drew a pile of bank-notes from the piano, and without counting the packets handed a million of francs to the marquis.

"You can understand," he said, "that I cannot spend my time in watching vessels pass by to Bordeaux. So unless the dangers of this Bohemian life of ours have some attraction for you, unless you care to see South America and the nights of the tropics, and a bit of fighting now and again for the pleasure of helping to win a triumph for a young nation, or for the name of Simon Bolivar, we must part. The long-boat, manned with a trustworthy crew, is ready for you. And now let us hope that our third meeting will be completely happy."

"Victor," said Helene in a dissatisfied tone, "I should like to see a little more of my father."

"Ten minutes more or less may bring up a French frigate. However, so be it, we shall have a little fun. The men find things dull."

"Oh, father, go!" cried Helene, "and take these keepsakes from me to my sister and brothers and—mother," she added. She caught up a handful of jewels and precious stones, folded them in an Indian shawl, and timidly held it out.

"But what shall I say to them from you?" asked he. Her hesitation on the word "mother" seemed to have struck him.

"Oh! can you doubt me? I pray for their happiness every day."

"Helene," he began, as he watched her closely, "how if we should not meet again? Shall I never know why you left us?"

"That secret is not mine," she answered gravely. "Even if I had the right to tell it, perhaps I should not. For ten years I was more miserable than words can say——"

She broke off, and gave her father the presents for her family. The general had acquired tolerably easy views as to

A VAST COLUMN OF SMOKE RISING SPREAD LIKE A BROWN CLOUD.

booty in the course of a soldier's career, so he took Helene's gifts and comforted himself with the reflection that the Parisian captain was sure to wage war against the Spaniards as an honorable man, under the influence of Helene's pure and high-minded nature. His passion for courage carried all before it. It was ridiculous, he thought, to be squeamish in the matter; so he shook hands cordially with his captor, and kissed Helene, his only daughter, with a soldier's expansiveness; letting fall a tear on the face with the proud, strong look that once he had loved to see. "The Parisian," deeply moved, brought the children for his blessing. The parting was over, the last good-by was a long farewell-look, with something of tender regret on either side.

A strange sight to seaward met the general's eyes. The Saint-Ferdinand was blazing like a huge bonfire. The men told off to sink the Spanish brig had found a cargo of rum on board; and, as the Othello was already amply supplied, had lighted a floating bowl of punch on the high-seas, by way of a joke; a pleasantry pardonable enough in sailors, who hail any chance excitement as a relief from the apparent monotony of life at sea. As the general went over the side into the long-boat of the Saint-Ferdinand, manned by six vigorous rowers, he could not help looking at the burning vessel, as well as at the daughter who stood by her husband's side on the stern of the Othello. He saw Helene's white dress flutter like one more sail in the breeze; he saw the tall, noble figure against a background of sea, queenly still even in the presence of Ocean; and so many memories crowded up in his mind, that, with a soldier's recklessness of life, he forgot that he was being borne over the grave of the brave Gomez.

A vast column of smoke rising spread like a brown cloud, pierced here and there by fantastic shafts of sunlight. It was a second sky, a murky dome reflecting the glow of the fire as

if the under surface had been burnished; but above it soared the unchanging blue of the firmament, a thousand times fairer for the short-lived contrast. The strange hues of the smoke-cloud, black and red, tawny and pale by turns, blurred and blending into each other, shrouded the burning vessel as it flared, crackled, and groaned; the hissing tongues of flame licked up the rigging and flashed across the hull, like a rumor of riot flashing along the streets of a city. The burning rum sent up blue flitting lights. Some sea god might have been stirring the furious liquor as a student stirs the joyous flames of punch in an orgie. But in the overpowering sunlight, jealous of the insolent blaze, the colors were scarcely visible, and the smoke was but a film fluttering like a thin scarf in the noonday torrent of light and heat.

The Othello made the most of the little wind she could gain to fly on her new course. Swaying first to one side, then to the other, like a stag-beetle on the wing, the fair vessel beat to windward on her zigzag flight to the south. Sometimes she was hidden from sight by the straight column of smoke that flung fantastic shadows across the water, then gracefully she shot out clear of it, and Helene, catching sight of her father, again waved her handkerchief for yet one more farewell greeting.

A few more minutes, and the Saint-Ferdinand went down with a bubbling turmoil, at once effaced by the ocean. Nothing of all that had been was left but a smoke-cloud hanging in the breeze. The Othello was far away, the long-boat had almost reached land, the cloud came between the frail skiff and the brig, and it was through a break in the swaying smoke that the general caught the last glimpse of Helene. A prophetic vision! Her dress and her white handkerchief stood out against the murky background. Then the brig was not even visible between the green water and the blue sky, and Helene was nothing but an imperceptible speck, a faint graceful line, an angel in heaven, a mental image, a memory.

The marquis had retrieved his fortunes, when he died, worn out with toil. A few months after his death, in 1833, the marquise was obliged to take Moïna to a watering-place in the Pyrenees, for the capricious child had a wish to see the beautiful mountain scenery. They left the baths, and the following tragical incident occurred on their way home.

"Dear me, mother," said Moïna, "it was very foolish of us not to stay among the mountains a few days longer. It was much nicer there. Did you hear that horrid child moaning all night, and that wretched woman, gabbling away in patois no doubt, for I could not understand a single word she said. What kind of people can they have put in the next room to ours? This is one of the most horrid nights I have ever spent in my life."

"I heard nothing," said the marquise, "but I will see the landlady, darling, and engage the next room, and then we shall have the whole suite of rooms to ourselves, and there will be no more noise. How do you feel this morning? Are you tired?"

As she spoke, the marquise rose and went to Moïna's bedside.

"Let us see," she said, feeling for the girl's hand.

"Oh! let me alone, mother," said Moïna; "your fingers are cold."

She turned her head round on the pillow as she spoke, pettishly, but with such engaging grace, that a mother could scarcely have taken it amiss. Just then a wailing cry echoed through the next room, a faint prolonged cry, that must surely have gone to the heart of any woman who heard it.

"Why, if you heard *that* all night long, why did you not wake me? We should have——"

A deeper moan than any that had gone before it interrupted the marquise.

"Some one is dying there," she cried, and hurried out of the room.

"Send Pauline to me!" called Moïna. "I shall get up and dress."

The marquise hastened downstairs, and found the landlady in the courtyard with a little group of people about her, apparently much interested in something that she was telling them.

"Madame, you have put some one in the next room who seems to be very ill indeed——"

"Oh! don't talk to me about it!" cried the mistress of the house. "I have just sent some one for the mayor. Just imagine it; it is a woman, a poor unfortunate creature that came here last night on foot. She comes from Spain; she has no passport and no money; she was carrying her baby on her back, and the child was dying. I could not refuse to take her in. I went up to see her this morning myself; for when she turned up yesterday, it made me feel dreadfully bad to look at her. Poor soul! she and the child were lying in bed, and both of them at death's door. 'Madame,' says she, pulling a gold ring off her finger, 'this is all that I have left; take it in payment, it will be enough; I shall not stay here long. Poor little one! we shall die together soon!' she said, looking at the child. I took her ring, and I asked her who she was, but she never would tell me her name. I have just sent for the doctor and Monsieur le Maire."

"Why you must do all that can be done for her," cried the marquise. "Good heavens! perhaps it is not too late! I will pay for everything that is necessary——"

"Ah! my lady, she looks to me to be uncommonly proud, and I don't know that she would allow it."

"I will go to see her at once."

The marquise went up forthwith to the stranger's room, without thinking of the shock that the sight of her widow's weeds might give to a woman who was said to be dying. At the sight of that dying woman the marquise turned pale. In

spite of the changes wrought by fearful suffering in Helene's beautiful face, she recognized her eldest daughter.

But Helene, when she saw a woman dressed in black, sat upright in bed with a shriek of horror. Then she sank back; she knew her mother.

"My daughter," said Mme. d'Aiglemont, "what is to be done? Pauline!—— Moïna!——"

"Nothing now for me," said Helene faintly. "I had hoped to see my father once more, but your mourning——" she broke off, clutched her child to her heart as if to give it warmth, and kissed its forehead. Then she turned her eyes on her mother, and the marquise met the old reproach in them, tempered with forgiveness, it is true, but still reproach. She saw it, and would not see it. She forgot that Helene was the child conceived amid tears and despair, the child of duty, the cause of one of the greatest sorrows in her life. She stole to her eldest daughter's side, remembering nothing but that Helene was her firstborn, the child who had taught her to know the joys of motherhood. The mother's eyes were full of tears. "Helene, my child!——" she cried, with her arms about her daughter.

Helene was silent. Her own babe had just drawn its last breath on her breast.

Moïna came into the room with Pauline, her maid, and the landlady and the doctor. The marquise was holding her daughter's ice-cold hand in both of hers, and gazing at her in despair; but the widowed woman, who had escaped shipwreck with but one of all her fair band of children, spoke in a voice that was dreadful to hear. "All this is your work," she said. "If you had but been for me, all that——"

"Moïna, go! Go out of the room, all of you!" cried Mme. d'Aiglemont, her shrill tone drowning Helene's voice. "For pity's sake," she continued, "let us not begin these miserable quarrels again now——"

"I will be silent," Helene answered with a preternatural

effort. "I am a mother, I know that Moïna ought not, must not—— Where is my child?"

Moïna came back, impelled by curiosity.

"Sister," said the spoilt child, "the doctor——"

"It is all of no use," said Helene. "Oh! why did I not die as a girl of sixteen when I meant to take my own life? There can be no happiness outside the laws. Moïna—— you——"

Her head sank till her face lay against the face of the little one; in her agony she strained her babe to her breast, and died.

"Your sister, Moïna," said Mme. d'Aiglemont, bursting into tears when she reached her room, "your sister meant no doubt to tell you that a girl will never find happiness in a romantic life, in living as nobody else does, and, above all things, far away from her mother."

VI.

THE OLD AGE OF A GUILTY MOTHER.

It was one of the earliest June days of the year 1844. A lady of fifty or thereabout, for she looked older than her actual age, was pacing up and down one of the sunny paths in the garden of a great mansion in the Rue Plumet in Paris. It was noon. The lady took two or three turns along the gently winding garden-walk, careful never to lose sight of a certain row of windows, to which she seemed to give her whole attention; then she sat down on a bench, a piece of elegant semi-rusticity made of branches with the bark left on the wood. From the place where she sat she could look through the garden railings along the inner boulevards to the wonderful dome of the Invalides rising above the crests of a forest of elm-trees, and see the less striking view of her own grounds terminating in the gray-stone front of one of the finest hotels in the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

Silence lay over the neighboring gardens and the boulevards stretching away to the Invalides. Day scarcely begins at noon in that aristocratic quarter, and masters and servants are all alike asleep, or just awakening, unless some young lady takes it into her head to go for an early ride, or a gray-headed diplomatist rises betimes to redraft a protocol.

The elderly lady stirring abroad at that hour was the Marquise d'Aiglemont, the mother of Mme. de Saint-Héreen, to whom the great house belonged. The marquise had made over the mansion and almost her whole fortune to her daughter, reserving only an annuity for herself.

The Comtesse Moïna de Saint-Héreen was Mme. d'Aiglemont's youngest child. The marquise had made every sacrifice to marry her daughter to the eldest son of one of the

greatest houses of France; and this was only what might have been expected, for the lady had lost her sons, first one and then the other. Gustave, Marquis d'Aiglemont, had died of the cholera; Abel, the second, had fallen in Algeria. Gustave had left a widow and children, but the dowager's affection for her sons had been only moderately warm, and for the next generation it was decidedly tepid. She was always civil to her daughter-in-law, but her feeling toward the young marquise was the distinctly conventional affection which good taste and good manners require us to feel for our relatives. The fortunes of her dead children having been settled, she could devote her savings and her own property to her darling Moïna.

Moïna, beautiful and fascinating from childhood, was Mme. d'Aiglemont's favorite; loved beyond all the others with an instinctive or involuntary love, a fatal drawing of the heart, which sometimes seems inexplicable, sometimes, and to a close observer, only too easy to explain. Her darling's pretty face, the sound of Moïna's voice, her ways, her manner, her looks and gestures, roused all the deepest emotions that can stir a mother's heart with trouble, rapture, or delight. The springs of the marquise's life, of yesterday, to-morrow, and to-day, lay in that young heart. Moïna, with better fortune, had survived four older children. As a matter of fact, Mme. d'Aiglemont had lost her eldest daughter, a charming girl, in a most unfortunate manner, said gossip, nobody knew exactly what became of her; and then she lost a little boy of five by a dreadful accident.

The child of her affections had, however, been spared to her, and doubtless the marquise saw the will of heaven in that fact; for of those who had died, she kept but very shadowy recollections in some far-off corner of her heart; her memories of her dead children were like the headstones on a battlefield, you can scarcely see them for the flowers that have sprung up about them since. Of course, if the world had

chosen, it might have said some hard truths about the marquise, might have taken her to task for shallowness and an overweening preference for one child at the expense of the rest; but the world of Paris is swept along by the full flood of new events, new ideas, and new fashions, and it was inevitable that Mme. d'Aiglemont should be in some sort allowed to drop out of sight. So nobody thought of blaming her for coldness or neglect which concerned no one, whereas her quick, apprehensive tenderness for Moïna was found highly interesting by not a few who respected it as a sort of superstition. Beside, the marquise scarcely went into society at all; and the few families who knew her thought of her as a kindly, gentle, indulgent woman, wholly devoted to her family. What but a curiosity, keen indeed, would seek to pry beneath the surface with which the world is quite satisfied? And what would we not pardon to old people, if only they will efface themselves like shadows, and consent to be regarded as memories and nothing more!

Indeed, Mme. d'Aiglemont became a kind of example complacently held up by the younger generation to fathers of families, and frequently cited to mothers-in-law. She had made over her property to Moïna in her own lifetime; the young countess' happiness was enough for her, she only lived in her daughter. If some cautious old person or morose uncle here and there condemned the course with—"Perhaps Madame d'Aiglemont may be sorry some day that she gave up her fortune to her daughter; she may be sure of Moïna, but how can she be equally sure of her son-in-law?"—these prophets were cried down on all sides, and from all sides a chorus of praise went up for Moïna.

"It ought to be said, in justice to Madame de Saint-Héreen, that her mother cannot feel the slightest difference," remarked a young married woman. "Madame d'Aiglemont is admirably well housed. She has a carriage at her disposal, and can go everywhere just as she used to do——"

"Except to the Italiens," remarked a low voice. (This was an elderly parasite, one of those persons who show their independence—as they think—by riddling their friends with epigrams.) "Except to the Italiens. And if the dowager cares for anything on this earth but her daughter—it is music. Such a good performer she was in her time! But the countess' box is always full of young butterflies, and the countess' mother would be in the way; the young lady is talked about already as a great flirt. So the poor mother never goes to the Italiens."

"Madame de Saint-Héreen has delightful 'At Homes' for her mother," said a rosebud. "All Paris goes to her salon."

"And no one pays any attention to the marquise," returned the parasite.

"The fact is that Madame d'Aiglemont is never alone," remarked a coxcomb, siding with the young women.

"In the morning," the old observer continued in a discreet voice, "in the morning dear Moïna is asleep. At four o'clock dear Moïna drives in the Bois. In the evening dear Moïna goes to a ball or to the Bouffes. Still, it is certainly true that Madame d'Aiglemont has the privilege of seeing her dear daughter while she dresses, and again at dinner, if dear Moïna happens to dine with her mother. Not a week ago, sir," continued the elderly person, laying his hand on the arm of the shy tutor, a new arrival in the house, "not a week ago, I saw the poor mother, solitary and sad, by her own fireside. 'What is the matter?' I asked. The marquise looked up smiling, but I am quite sure that she had been crying. 'I was thinking that it is a strange thing that I should be left alone when I have had five children,' she said, 'but that is our destiny! And, beside, I am happy when I know that Moïna is enjoying herself.' She could say that to me, for I knew her husband when he was alive. A poor stick he was, and uncommonly lucky to have such a wife; it was certainly

owing to her that he was made a peer of France, and had a place at Court under Charles X."

Yet such mistaken ideas get about in social gossip, and such mischief is done by it, that the historian of manners is bound to exercise his discretion, and weigh the assertions so recklessly made. After all, who is to say that either mother or daughter was right or wrong. There is but One who can read and judge their hearts! And how often does He wreak His vengeance in the family circle, using throughout all time children as his instruments against their mothers, and fathers against their sons, raising up peoples against kings, and princes against peoples, sowing strife and division everywhere? And in the world of ideas, are not old opinions and feelings expelled by new feelings and opinions, much as withered leaves are thrust forth by the young leaf-buds in the spring?—all in obedience to the immutable Scheme; all to some end which God alone knows. Yet, surely, all things proceed to Him, or rather, to Him all things return.

Such thoughts of religion, the natural thoughts of age, floated up now and again on the current of Mme. d'Aiglemont's thoughts; they were always dimly present in her mind, but sometimes they shone out clearly, sometimes they were carried under, like flowers tossed on the vexed surface of a stormy sea.

She sat on the garden-seat, tired with walking, exhausted with much thinking—with the long thoughts in which a whole lifetime rises up before the mind, and is spread out like a scroll before the eyes of those who feel that Death is near.

If a poet had chanced to pass along the boulevard, he would have found an interesting picture in the face of this woman, grown old before her time. As she sat under the dotted shadow of the acacia, the shadow the acacia casts at noon, a thousand thoughts were written for all the world to see on her features, pale and cold even in the hot, bright sunlight.

There was something sadder than the sense of waning life in that expressive face, some trouble that went deeper than the weariness of experience. It was a face of a type that fixes you in a moment among a host of characterless faces that fail to draw a second glance, a face to set you thinking. Among a thousand pictures in a gallery you are strongly impressed by the sublime anguish on the face of some Madonna of Murillo's; by some Beatrice Cenci in which Guido's art portrays the most touching innocence against a background of horror and crime; by the awe and majesty that should encircle a king, caught once and for ever by Velasquez in the sombre face of a Philip II., and so is it with some living human faces; they are tyrannous pictures which speak to you, submit you to searching scrutiny, and give response to your inmost thoughts, nay, there are faces that set forth a whole drama, and Mme. d'Aiglemont's stony face was one of these awful tragedies, one of such faces as Dante Alighieri saw by thousands in his vision.

For the little season that a woman's beauty is in flower it serves her admirably well in the dissimulation to which her natural weakness and our social laws condemn her. A young face and rich color, and eyes that glow with light, a gracious maze of such subtle, manifold lines and curves, flawless and perfectly traced, is a screen that hides everything that stirs the woman within. A flush tells nothing, it only heightens the coloring so brilliant already; all the fires that burn within can add little light to the flame of life in eyes which only seem the brighter for the flash of a passing pain. Nothing is so discreet as a young face, for nothing is less mobile; it has the serenity, the surface smoothness, and the freshness of a lake. There is no character in women's faces before the age of thirty. The painter discovers nothing there but pink and white, and the smile and expression that repeat the same thought in the same way—a thought of youth and love that goes no further than youth and love. But the face of an old woman has expressed

all that lay in her nature; passion has carved lines on her features; love and wifehood and motherhood, and extremes of joy and anguish, have wrung them, and left their traces in a thousand wrinkles, all of which speak a language of their own; then is it that a woman's face becomes sublime in its horror, beautiful in its melancholy, grand in its calm. If it is permissible to carry the strange metaphor still further, it might be said that in the dried-up lake you can see the traces of all the torrents that once poured into it and made it what it is. An old face is nothing to the frivolous world; the frivolous world is shocked by the sight of the destruction of such comeliness as it can understand; a commonplace artist sees nothing there. An old face is the province of the poets among poets of those who can recognize that something which is called Beauty, apart from all the conventions underlying so many superstitions in art and taste.

Though Mme. d'Aiglemont wore a fashionable bonnet, it was easy to see that her once black hair had been bleached by cruel sorrows; yet her good taste and the gracious acquired instincts of a woman of fashion could be seen in the way she wore it, divided into two bandeaux, following the outlines of a forehead that still retained some traces of former dazzling beauty, worn and lined though it was. The contours of her face, the regularity of her features, gave some idea, faint in truth, of that beauty of which surely she had once been proud; but those traces spoke still more plainly of the anguish which had laid it waste, of sharp pain that had withered the temples, and made those hollows in her cheeks, and empurpled the eyelids and robbed them of their lashes, and the eyes of their charm. She was in every way so noiseless; she moved with a slow, self-contained gravity that showed itself in her whole bearing, and struck a certain awe into others. Her diffident manner had changed to positive shyness, due apparently to a habit now of some years' growth, of effacing herself in her

daughter's presence. She spoke very seldom, and in the low tones used by those who perforce must live within themselves a life of reflection and concentration. This demeanor led others to regard her with an indefinable feeling which was neither awe nor compassion, but a mysterious blending of the many ideas awakened in us by compassion and awe. Finally, there was something in her wrinkles, in the lines of her face, in the look of pain in those wan eyes of hers, that bore eloquent testimony to tears that never had fallen, tears that had been absorbed by her heart. Unhappy creatures, accustomed to raise their eyes to heaven, in mute appeal against the bitterness of their lot, would have seen at once from her eyes that she was broken in to the cruel discipline of ceaseless prayer, would have discerned the almost imperceptible symptoms of the secret bruises which destroy all the flowers of the soul, even the sentiment of motherhood.

Painters have colors for these portraits, but words, and the mental images called up by words, fail to reproduce such impressions faithfully; there are mysterious signs and tokens in the tones of the coloring and in the look of human faces, which the mind only seizes through the sense of sight; and the poet is fain to record the tale of the events which wrought the havoc to make their terrible ravages understood.

The face spoke of cold and steady storm, an inward conflict between a mother's longsuffering and the limitations of our nature, for our human affections are bounded by our humanity, and the infinite has no place in finite creatures. Sorrow endured in silence had at last produced an indefinable morbid something in this woman. Doubtless mental anguish had reacted on the physical frame, and some disease, perhaps an aneurism, was undermining Julie's life. Deep-seated grief lies to all appearance very quietly in the depths where it is conceived, yet, so still and apparently dormant as it is, it ceaselessly corrodes the soul, like the terrible acid which eats away crystal.

Two tears made their way down the marquise's cheeks; she rose to her feet as if some thought more poignant than any that preceded it had cut her to the quick. She had doubtless come to a conclusion as to Moïna's future; and now, foreseeing clearly all the troubles in store for her child, the sorrows of her own unhappy life had begun to weigh once more upon her. The key of her position must be sought in her daughter's situation.

The Comte de Saint-Héreen had been away for nearly six months on a political mission. The countess, whether from sheer giddiness, or in obedience to the countless instincts of woman's coquetry, or to essay its power—with all the vanity of a frivolous fine lady, all the capricious waywardness of a child—was amusing herself, during her husband's absence, by playing with the passion of a clever but heartless man, distracted (so he said) with love, the love that combines readily with every petty social ambition of a self-conceited coxcomb. Mme. d'Aiglemont, whose long experience had given her a knowledge of life, and taught her to judge of men and to dread the world, watched the course of this flirtation, and saw that it could only end in one way, if her daughter should fall into the hands of an utterly unscrupulous intriguer. How could it be other than a terrible thought for her that her daughter listened willingly to this *roué?* Her darling stood on the brink of a precipice, she felt horribly sure of it, yet dared not hold her back. She was afraid of the countess. She knew, too, that Moïna would not listen to her wise warnings; she knew that she had no influence over that nature—iron for her, silken-soft for all others. Her mother's tenderness might have led her to sympathize with the troubles of a passion called forth by the nobler qualities of a lover, but this was no passion—it was coquetry, and the marquise despised Alfred de Vandenesse, knowing that he had entered upon this flirtation with Moïna as if it were a game of chess.

But if Alfred de Vandenesse made her shudder with disgust,

she was obliged—unhappy mother!—to conceal the strongest reason for her loathing in the deepest recesses of her heart. She was on terms of intimate friendship with the Marquis de Vandenesse, the young man's father; and this friendship, a respectable one in the eyes of the world, excused the son's constant presence in the house, he professing an old attachment, dating from childhood, for Mme. de Saint-Héreen. More than this, in vain did Mme. d'Aiglemont nerve herself to come between Moïna and Alfred de Vandenesse with a terrible word, knowing beforehand that she would not succeed; knowing that the strong reason which ought to separate them would carry no weight; that she should humiliate herself vainly in her daughter's eyes. Alfred was too corrupt; Moïna too clever to believe the revelation; the young countess would turn it off and treat it as a piece of maternal strategy. Mme. d'Aiglemont had built her prison walls with her own hands; she had immured herself only to see Moïna's happiness ruined thence before she died; she was to look on helplessly at the ruin of the young life which had been her pride and joy and comfort, a life a thousand times dearer to her than her own. What words can describe anguish so hideous beyond belief, such unfathomed depths of pain?

She waited for Moïna to rise, with the impatience and sickening dread of a doomed man, who longs to have done with life, yet turns cold at the thought of the headsman. She had braced herself for a last effort, but perhaps the prospect of the certain failure of the attempt was less dreadful to her than the fear of receiving yet again one of those thrusts that went to her very heart—before that fear her courage ebbed away. Her mother's love had come to this. To love her child, to be afraid of her, to shrink from the thought of the stab, yet to go forward. So great is a mother's affection in a loving nature that, before it can fade away into indifference, the mother herself must die or find support in some great power without her, in religion or another love. Since the

marquise rose that morning, her fatal memory had called up before her some of those things, so slight to all appearance, that make landmarks in a life. Sometimes, indeed, a whole tragedy grows out of a single gesture; the tone in which a few words were spoken rends a whole life in twain; a glance into indifferent eyes is the death-blow of the gladdest love; and, unhappily, such gestures and such words were only too familiar to Mme. d'Aiglemont—she had met so many glances that wound the soul. No, there was nothing in those memories to bid her hope. On the contrary, everything went to show that Alfred had destroyed her hold on her daughter's heart, that the thought of her was now associated with duty—not with gladness. In ways innumerable, in things that were mere trifles in themselves, the countess' detestable conduct rose up before her mother; and the marquise, it may be, looked on Moïna's undutifulness as a punishment, and found excuses for her daughter in the will of heaven, that so she still might adore the hand that smote her.

All these things passed through her memory that morning, and each recollection wounded her afresh so sorely that, with a very little additional pain, her brimming cup of bitterness must have overflowed. A cold look might kill her.

The little details of domestic life are difficult to paint; but one or two, perhaps, will suffice to give an idea of the rest.

The Marquise d'Aiglemont, for instance, had grown rather deaf, but she could never induce Moïna to raise her voice for her. Once, with the naïveté of suffering, she had begged Moïna to repeat some remark which she had failed to catch, and Moïna obeyed, but with so bad a grace that Mme. d'Aiglemont had never permitted herself to make her modest request again. Ever since that day, when Moïna was talking or retailing a piece of news, her mother was careful to come near to listen; but this infirmity of deafness appeared to put the countess out of patience, and she would grumble thoughtlessly about it. This instance is one from among very many that

must have gone to the mother's heart; and yet nearly all of them might have escaped a close observer, they consisted in faint shades of manner invisible to any but a woman's eyes. Take another example: Mme. Aiglemont happened to say one day that the Princesse de Cadignan had called upon her. "Did she come to see *you!*" Moïna exclaimed. That was all; but the countess' voice and manner expressed surprise and well-bred contempt in semitones. Any heart, still young and sensitive, might well have applauded the philanthropy of savage tribes who kill off their old people when they grow too feeble to cling to a strongly shaken bough. Mme. d'Aiglemont rose smiling, and went away to weep alone.

Well-bred people, and women especially, only betray their feelings by imperceptible touches; but those who can look back over their own experience on such bruises as this mother's heart received, know also how the heart-strings vibrate to these light touches. Overcome by her memories, Mme. d'Aiglemont recollected one of those microscopically small things, so stinging and so painful was it that never till this moment had she felt all the heartless contempt that lurked beneath smiles.

At the sound of shutters thrown back at her daughter's windows, she dried her tears, and hastened up the pathway by the railings. As she went, it struck her that the gardener had been unusually careful to rake the sand along the walk which had been neglected for some little time. As she stood under her daughter's windows, the shutters were hastily closed.

"Moïna, is it you?" she asked.

No answer.

The marquise went on into the house.

"Madame la Comtesse is in the little drawing-room," said the maid, when the marquise asked whether Mme. de Saint-Héreen had finished dressing.

Mme. d'Aiglemont hurried to the little drawing-room; her heart was too full, her brain too busy to notice matters so

slight; but there on a sofa sat the countess in her loose morning gown, her hair in disorder under the cap tossed carelessly on her head, her feet thrust into slippers. The key of her bedroom hung at her girdle. Her face, aglow with color, bore traces of almost stormy thought.

"What makes people come in!" she cried crossly. "Oh! it is you, mother?" she interrupted herself, with a preoccupied look.

"Yes, child; it is your mother."

Something in her tone turned those words into an outpouring of the heart, the cry of some deep inward feeling, only to be described by the word "holy." So thoroughly in truth had she rehabilitated the sacred character of a mother that her daughter was impressed, and turned toward her, with something of awe, uneasiness, and remorse in her manner. The room was the farthest of a suite, and safe from indiscreet intrusion, for no one could enter it without giving warning of approach through the previous apartments. The marquise closed the door.

"It is my duty, my child, to warn you in one of the most serious crises in the lives of us women; you have perhaps reached it unconsciously, and I am come to speak to you as a friend rather than as a mother. When you married, you acquired freedom of action; you are only accountable to your husband now; but I asserted my authority so little (perhaps I was wrong) that I think I have a right to expect you to listen to me, for once at least, in a critical position when you must need counsel. Bear in mind, Moïna, that you are married to a man of high ability, a man of whom you may well be proud, a man who——"

"I know what you are going to say mother!" Moïna broke in pettishly. "I am to be lectured about Alfred——"

"Moïna," the marquise said gravely, as she struggled with her tears, "you would not guess at once if you did not feel——"

"What?" asked Moïna, almost haughtily. "Why, really, mother——"

Mme. d'Aiglemont here summoned up all her strength. "Moïna," she said, "you must attend carefully to this that I ought to tell you——"

"I am attending," returned the countess, folding her arms and affecting insolent submission. "Permit me, mother, to ring for Pauline," she added, with incredible self-possession; "I will send her away first."

She rang the bell.

"My dear child, Pauline cannot possibly hear——"

"Mamma," interrupted the countess, with a gravity which must have struck her mother as something unusual, "I must——"

She stopped short, for the woman was in the room.

"Pauline, go *yourself* to Baudran's and ask why my hat has not yet been sent."

Then the countess reseated herself and scrutinized her mother. The marquise, with a swelling heart and dry eyes, in painful agitation, which none but a mother can fully understand, began to open Moïna's eyes to the risk that she was running. But either the countess felt hurt and indignant at her mother's suspicions of a son of the Marquis de Vandenesse or she was seized with a sudden fit of inexplicable levity caused by the inexperience of youth. She took advantage of a pause.

"Mamma, I really thought you were only jealous of *the father*——" she said, with a forced laugh.

Mme. d'Aiglemont shut her eyes and bent her head at the words, with a very faint, almost inaudible sigh. She looked up and out into space, as if she felt the common overmastering impulse to appeal to God at the great crises of our lives; then she looked at her daughter, and her eyes were full of awful majesty and the expression of profound sorrow.

"My child," she said, and her voice was hardly recog-

nizable, "you have been less merciful to your mother than he against whom she sinned; less merciful than perhaps God himself will be!"

Mme. d'Aiglemont rose; at the door she turned; but she saw nothing but surprise in her daughter's face. She went out. Scarcely had she reached the garden when her strength failed her. There was a violent pain at her heart, and she sank down on a bench. As her eyes wandered over the path, she saw fresh marks impressed on it, a man's footprints were distinctly recognizable. It was too late, then, beyond a doubt. Now she began to understand the reason for that order given to Pauline, and with these torturing thoughts came a revelation more hateful than any that had gone before it. She drew her own inferences—the son of the Marquis de Vandenesse had destroyed all feeling of respect for her in her daughter's mind. The physical pain grew worse; by degrees she lost consciousness, and sat like one asleep upon the garden-seat.

The Countess de Saint-Héreen, left to herself, thought that her mother had given her a somewhat shrewd home-thrust, but a kiss and a few attentions that evening would make all right again.

A shrill cry came from the garden. She leaned carelessly out, as Pauline, not yet departed on her errand, called out for help, holding the marquise in her arms.

"Do not frighten my daughter!" these were the last words the mother uttered.

Moïna saw them carry in a pale and lifeless form that struggled for breath, and arms moving restlessly as in protest or effort to speak; and overcome by the sight, Moïna followed in silence, and helped to undress her mother and lay her on her bed. The burden of her fault was greater than she could bear. In that supreme hour she learned to know her mother —too late, she could make no reparation now. She would have them leave her alone with her mother; and when there was no one else in the room, when she felt that the hand

which had always been so tender for her was now grown cold to her touch, she broke out into weeping. Her tears aroused the marquise; she could still look at her darling Moïna; and at the sound of sobbing, that seemed as if it must rend the delicate, disheveled breast, could smile back at her daughter. That smile taught the unnatural child that forgiveness is always to be found in the great deep of a mother's heart.

Servants on horseback had been dispatched at once for the physician and surgeon and for Mme. d'Aiglemont's grandchildren. Mme. d'Aiglemont the younger and her little sons arrived with the medical men, a sufficiently impressive, silent, and anxious little group, which the servants of the house came to join. The young marquise, hearing no sound, tapped gently at the door. That signal, doubtless, roused Moïna from her grief, for she flung open the door and stood before them. No words could have spoken more plainly than that disheveled figure looking out with haggard eyes upon the assembled family. Before that living picture of Remorse, the rest were dumb. It was easy to see that the marquise's feet were stretched out stark and stiff with the agony of death; and Moïna, leaning against the door-frame, looking in their faces, spoke in a hollow voice—

"I have lost my mother!"

PARIS, 1828–1844.

A START IN LIFE.

Translated by CLARA BELL.

To Laure,

To whose bright and modest wit I owe the idea of this Scene. Hers be the honor!

Her brother,

DE BALZAC.

RAILROADS, in a future now not far distant, must lead to the disappearance of certain industries and modify others, especially such as are concerned in the various modes of transport commonly used in the neighborhood of Paris. In fact, the persons and the things which form the accessories of this little drama will ere long give it the dignity of an archæological study. Will not our grandchildren be glad to know something of a time which they will speak of as the old days?

For instance, the picturesque vehicles known as *coucous*, which used to stand on the Place de la Concorde and crowd the Cours-la-Reine, which flourished so greatly during a century, and still survived in 1830, exist no more. Even on the occasion of the most attractive rural festivity, hardly one is to be seen on the road in this year 1842.

In 1820 not all the places famous for their situation, and designated as the environs of Paris, had any regular service of coaches. The Touchards, father and son, had acquired a monopoly of conveyances to and from the largest towns within a radius of fifteen leagues, and their establishment occupied splendid premises in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis. In spite of their old standing and their strenuous efforts, in spite of their large capital and all the advantages of strong cen-

tralization, Touchards' service had formidable rivals in the *coucous* of the Faubourg Saint-Denis for distances of seven or eight leagues out of Paris. The Parisian has indeed such a passion for the country that local establishments also held their own in many cases against the *Petites Messageries* (little stage-coaches), a name given to Touchards' short-distance coaches, to distinguish them from the *Grandes Messageries* (large stage-coaches), the general conveyance company, in the Rue Montmartre.

At that time the success of the Touchards stimulated speculation; conveyances were put on the road to and from the smallest towns—handsome, quick, and commodious vehicles, starting and returning at fixed hours; and these, in a circuit of ten leagues or so, gave rise to vehement competition. Beaten on the longer distances, the *coucou* fell back on short runs, and survived a few years longer. It finally succumbed when the omnibus had proved the possibility of packing eighteen persons into a vehicle drawn by two horses. Nowadays the *coucou*, if a bird of such heavy flight is by chance still to be found in the recesses of some store for dilapidated vehicles, would, from its structure and arrangement, be the subject of learned investigations, like Cuvier's researches on the animals discovered in the lime-quarries of Montmartre.

These smaller companies, being threatened by larger speculations competing, after 1822, with the Touchards, had nevertheless a fulcrum of support in the sympathies of the residents in the places they plied to. The master of the concern, who was both owner and driver of the vehicle, was usually a tavernkeeper of the district, to whom its inhabitants were as familiar as were their common objects and interests. He was intelligent in fulfilling commissions; he asked less for his little services, and therefore obtained more, than the employes of the Touchards. He was clever at evading the necessity for an excise pass. At a pinch he would infringe the rules as to the number of passengers he might carry. In fact, he was

master of the affections of the people. Hence, when a rival appeared in the field, if the old-established conveyance ran on alternate days of the week, there were persons who would postpone their journey to take it in the company of the original driver, even though his vehicle and horses were none of the safest and best.

One of the lines which the Touchards, father and son, tried hard to monopolize, but which was hotly disputed—nay, which is still a subject of dispute with their successors the Toulouses—was that between Paris and Beaumont-sur-Oise, a highly profitable district, since in 1822 three lines of conveyances worked it at once. The Touchards lowered their prices, but in vain, and in vain increased the number of services; in vain they put superior vehicles on the road, the competitors held their own, so profitable is a line running through little towns like Saint-Denis and Saint-Brice, and such a string of villages as Prerrefitte, Groslay, Écouen, Poncelles, Moisselles, Baillet, Monsoult, Maffliers, Franconville, Presles, Nointel, Nerville, and others. The Touchards at last extended their line of service as far as to Chambly; the rivals ran to Chambly. And at the present day the Toulouses go as far as Beauvais.

On this road, the highway to England, there is a place which is not ill-named *la Cave* (the Cellar), a paved way leading down into one of the most delightful nooks of the Oise valley, and to the little town of l'Isle-Adam, doubly famous as the native place of the now extinct family of l'Isle-Adam, and as the splendid residence of the Princes of Bourbon-Conti. L'Isle-Adam is a charming little town, flanked by two large hamlets, that of Nogent and that of Parmain, both remarkable for the immense quarries which have furnished the materials for the finest edifices of Paris, and indeed abroad too, for the base and capitals of the theatre at Brussels are of Nogent stone.

Though remarkable for its beautiful points of view and for

famous castles built by princes, abbots, or famous architects, as at Cassan, Stors, le Val, Nointel, Persan, etc., this district, in 1822, had as yet escaped competition, and was served by two coach-owners, who agreed to work it between them. This exceptional state of things was based on causes easily explained. From la Cave, where, on the highroad, begins the fine paved way, due to the magnificence of Princes of Conti, to l'Isle Adam, is a distance of two leagues; no main-line coach could diverge so far from the highway, especially as l'Isle-Adam was at that time the end of things in that direction. The road led thither, and ended there. Of late, a highroad joins the valley of Montmorency to that of l'Isle-Adam. Leaving Saint-Denis, it passes through Saint-Leu-Taverny, Méru, l'Isle-Adam, and along by the Oise as far as Beaumont. But in 1822 the only road to l'Isle-Adam was that made by the Princes de Conti.

Consequently Pierrotin and his colleague reigned supreme from Paris to l'Isle-Adam, beloved of all the district. Pierrotin's coach and his friend's ran by Stors, le Val, Parmain, Champagne, Mours, Prérolles, Nogent, Nerville, and Maffliers. Pierrotin was so well known that the residents at Monsoult, Moisselles, Baillet, and Saint-Brice, though living on the high-road, made use of his coach, in which there was more often a chance of a seat than in the Beaumont *diligence*, which was always full. Pierrotin and his friendly rival agreed to admiration. When Pierrotin started from l'Isle-Adam, the other set out from Paris, and vice-versa. Of the opposition driver, nothing need be said. Pierrotin was the favorite in the line. And of the two, he alone appears on the scene in this veracious history. So it will suffice to say that the two coach-drivers lived on excellent terms, competing in honest warfare, and contending for customers without sharp practice. In Paris, out of economy, they put up at the same inn, using the same yard, the same stable, the same coach-shed, the same office, the same booking-clerk. And this fact is enough to

show that Pierrotin and his opponent were "good dough," as the common folk say.

That inn, at the corner of the Rue d'Enghien, exists to this day, and is called the Silver Lion (Lion d'Argent). The proprietor of this hostelry—a hostelry from time immemorial for coach-drivers—himself managed a line of vehicles to Dammartin on so sound a basis that his neighbors the Touchards, of the *Petites Messageries* opposite, never thought of starting a conveyance on that road.

Though the coaches for l'Isle-Adam were supposed to set out punctually, Pierrotin and his friend displayed a degree of indulgence on this point which, while it won them the affections of the natives, brought down severe remonstrances from strangers who were accustomed to the exactitude of the larger public companies; but the two drivers of these vehicles, half *diligence*, half *coucou*, always found partisans among their regular customers. In the afternoon the start fixed for four o'clock always dragged on till half-past; and in the morning, though eight was the hour named, the coach never got off before nine.

This system was, however, very elastic. In summer, the golden season for coaches, the time of departure, rigorously punctual as concerned strangers, gave way for natives of the district. This method afforded Pierrotin the chance of pocketing the price of two places for one when a resident in the town came early to secure a place already booked by a bird of passage, who, by ill-luck, was behind time. Such elastic rules would certainly not be approved by a Puritan moralist; but Pierrotin and his colleague justified it by the hard times, by their losses during the winter season, by the necessity they would presently be under of purchasing better carriages, and, finally, by an exact application of the rules printed on their tickets, copies of which were of the greatest rarity, and never given but to those travelers who were so perverse as to insist.

Pierrotin, a man of forty, was already the father of a family. He had left the cavalry in 1815, when the army was disbanded, and then this very good fellow had succeeded his father, who drove a *coucou* between l'Isle-Adam and Paris on somewhat erratic principles. After marrying the daughter of a small tavernkeeper, he extended and regulated the business, and was noted for his intelligence and military punctuality. Brisk and decisive, Pierrotin—a nickname, no doubt—had a mobile countenance which gave an amusing expression and a semblance of intelligence to a face reddened by exposure to the weather. Nor did he lack the "gift of the gab," which is caught by intercourse with the world and by seeing different parts of it. His voice, by dint of talking to his horses and shouting to others to get out of the way, was somewhat harsh, but he could soften it to a customer.

His costume, that of coach-drivers of the superior class, consisted of stout, strong boots, heavy with nails, and made at l'Isle-Adam, trousers of bottle-green velveteen, and a jacket of the same, over which, in the exercise of his functions, he wore a blue blouse, embroidered in colors on the collar, shoulder-pieces, and wristbands. On his head was a cap with a peak. His experience of military service had stamped on Pierrotin the greatest respect for social superiority, and a habit of obedience to people of the upper ranks; but, while he was ready to be on familiar terms with the modest citizen, he was always respectful to women, of whatever class. At the same time, the habit of "carting folks about," to use his own expression, had led him to regard his travelers as parcels; though, being on feet, they demanded less care than the other merchandise, which was the aim and end of the service.

Warned by the general advance, which since the peace had begun to tell on his business, Pierrotin was determined not to be beaten by the progress of the world. Ever since the last summer season he had talked a great deal of a certain large conveyance he had ordered of Farry, Breilmann & Co.,

the best diligence builders, as being needed by the constant increase of travelers. Pierrotin's plant at that time consisted of two vehicles. One, which did duty for the winter, and the only one he ever showed to the tax-collector, was of the *coucou* species. The bulging sides of this vehicle allowed it to carry six passengers on two seats as hard as iron, though covered with yellow worsted velvet. These seats were divided by a wooden bar, which could be removed at pleasure or refixed in two grooves in the sides, at the height of a man's back. This bar, perfidiously covered by Pierrotin with yellow velvet, and called by him a back to the seat, was the cause of much despair to the travelers from the difficulty of moving and readjusting it. If the board was painful to fix, it was far more so to the shoulder-blades when it was fitted ; on the other hand, if it was not unshipped, it made entrance and egress equally perilous, especially to women.

Though each seat of this vehicle, which bulged at the sides, like a woman before childbirth, was licensed to hold no more than three passengers, it was not unusual to see eight packed in it like herrings in a barrel. Pierrotin declared that they were all the more comfortable since they formed a compact and immovable mass, whereas three were constantly thrown against each other, and often ran the risk of spoiling their hats against the roof of the vehicle by reason of the violent jolting on the road. In front of the body of this carriage there was a wooden box-seat, Pierrotin's driving-seat, which could also carry three passengers, who were designated, as all the world knows, as *lapins* (rabbits). Occasionally, Pierrotin would accommodate four *lapins*, and then sat askew on a sort of box below the front seat for the *lapins* to rest their feet on ; this was filled with straw or such parcels as could not be injured.

The body of the vehicle, painted yellow, was ornamented by a band of bright blue, on which might be read in white letters, on each side : L'Isle-Adam—Paris ; and on the back,

SERVICE DE L'ISLE-ADAM. Our descendants will be under a mistake if they imagine that this conveyance could carry no more than thirteen persons, including Pierrotin. On great occasions three more could be seated in a square compartment covered with tarpaulin in which trunks, boxes, and parcels were generally piled; but Pierrotin was too prudent to let any but regular customers sit there, and only took them up three or four hundred yards outside the barrier. These passengers in the *poulailler*, or hen-coop, the name given by the conductors to this part of a coach, were required to get out before reaching any village on the road where there was a station of gendarmerie; for the overloading, forbidden by the regulations "for the greater safety of travelers," was in these cases so excessive that the gendarme—always Pierrotin's very good friend—could not have excused himself from reporting such a flagrant breach of rules. But thus Pierrotin's vehicle, on certain Saturday evenings and Monday mornings, carted out fifteen passengers; and then to help pull it, he gave his large but aged horse, named Rougeot, the assistance of a second nag about as big as a pony, which he could never sufficiently praise. This little steed was a mare called Bichette; and she ate little, she was full of spirit, nothing could tire her, she was worth her weight in gold!

"My wife would not exchange her for that fat lazybones Rougeot!" Pierrotin would exclaim, when a traveler laughed at him about this concentrated *extract of horse*.

The difference between this carriage and the other was, that the second had four wheels. This vehicle, a remarkable structure, always spoken of as "the four-wheeled coach," could hold seventeen passengers, being intended to carry fourteen. It rattled so preposterously that the folk in l'Isle-Adam would say, "Here comes Pierrotin!" when he had but just come out of the wood that hangs on the slope to the valley. It was divided into two lobes, one of which, called the *intérieur*, the body of the coach, carried six passengers on

two seats; and the other, a sort of cab stuck on in front, was styled the *coupé*. This coupé could be closed by an inconvenient and eccentric arrangement of glass windows, which would take too long to describe in this place. The *four-wheeled coach* also had on top a sort of gig with a hood, into which Pierrotin packed six travelers; it closed with leather curtains. Pierrotin himself had an almost invisible perch below the glass windows of the coupé.

The coach to l'Isle-Adam only paid the taxes levied on public vehicles for the *coucou*, represented to carry six travelers, and whenever Pierrotin turned out the "four-wheeled coach" he took out a special license. This may seem strange indeed in these days; but at first the tax on vehicles, imposed somewhat timidly, allowed the owners of coaches to play these little tricks, which gave them the pleasure of "putting their thumbs to their noses" behind the collector's back, as they phrased it. By degrees, however, the hungry Exchequer grew strict; it allowed no vehicle to take the road without displaying the two plates which now certify that their capacity is registered and the tax paid. Everything, even a tax, has its age of innocence, and toward the end of 1822 that age was not yet over. Very often, in summer, the four-wheeled coach and the covered chaise made the journey in company, carrying in all thirty passengers, while Pierrotin paid only for six.

On these golden days the convoy started from the Faubourg Saint-Denis at half-past four, and arrived in style at l'Isle-Adam by ten o'clock at night. And then Pierrotin, proud of his run, which necessitated the hire of extra horses, would say: "We have made a good pace to-day!" To enable him to do nine leagues in five hours with this machinery, he did not stop, as the coaches usually do on this road, at Saint-Brice, Moisselles, and la Cave.

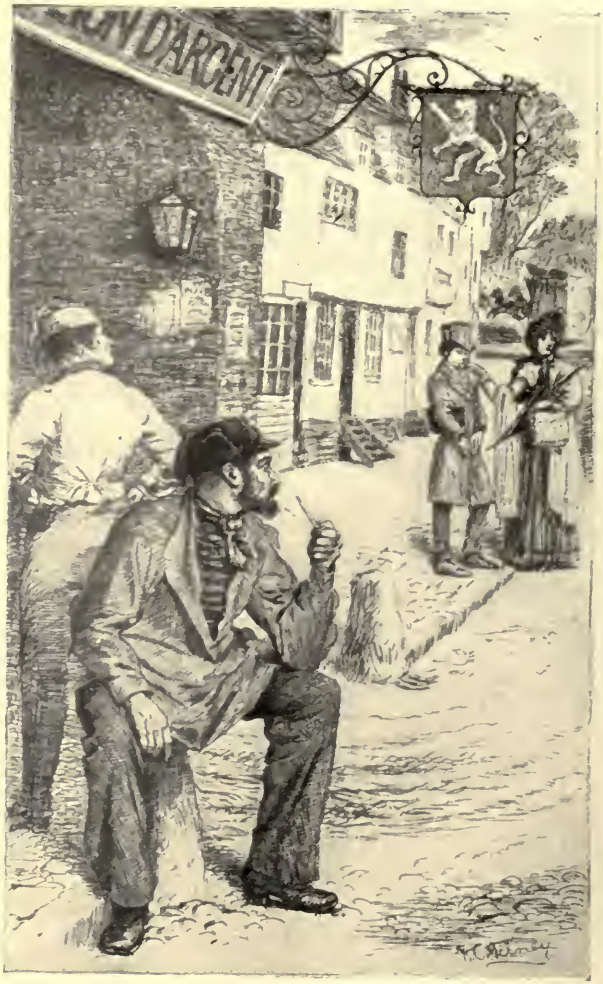
The Silver Lion occupied a plot of ground running very far back. Though the front of the Rue Saint-Denis has no more than three or four windows, there was at that time, on one

side of the long yard, with the stables at the bottom, a large house backing on the wall of the adjoining property. The entrance was through an arched way under the second floor, and there was standing-room here for two or three coaches. In 1822, the booking-office for all the lines that put up at the Silver Lion was kept by the innkeeper's wife, who had a book for each line; she took the money, wrote down the names, and good-naturedly accommodated passengers' luggage in her vast kitchen. The travelers were quite satisfied with this patriarchally free-and-easy mode of business. If they came too early, they sat down by the fire within the immense chimney-place, or lounged in the passage, or went to the Café de l'Echiquier, at the corner of the street of that name, parallel to the Rue d'Enghien, from which it is divided by a few houses only.

Quite early in the autumn of that year, one Saturday morning, Pierrotin, his hands stuffed through holes in his blouse and into his pockets, was standing at the front gate of the Silver Lion, whence he had a perspective view of the inn kitchen, and beyond it of the long yard and the stables at the end, like black caverns. The Dammartin diligence had just started, and was lumbering after Touchard's coaches. It was past eight o'clock. Under the wide archway, over which was inscribed on a long board: HOTEL DU LION D'ARGENT, the stablemen and coach-porters were watching the vehicles start at the brisk pace which deludes the traveler into the belief that the horses will continue to keep it up.

"Shall I bring out the horses, master?" said Pierrotin's stable-boy, when there was nothing more to be seen.

"A quarter-past eight, and I see no passengers," said Pierrotin. "What the deuce is become of them? Put the horses to, all the same. No parcels either. Bless us and save us! This afternoon, now, *he* won't know how to stow his passengers, as it is so fine, and I have only four booked. There's a


D'ARGENT

PIERROTIN SAT DOWN ON ONE OF THE ENORMOUS CURBSTONES.

pretty lookout for a Saturday! That's always the way when you're wanting the ready! It's dog's work, and work for a dog!"

"And if you had any, where would you stow 'em? You have nothing but your two-wheeled cab," said the luggage-porter, trying to smooth down Pierrotin.

"And what about my new coach?"

"Then there is such a thing as your new coach?" asked the sturdy Auvergnat, grinning and showing his front teeth, as white and as broad as almonds.

"You old good-for-nothing! Why, she will take the road to-morrow, Sunday, and we want eighteen passengers to fill her!"

"Oh, ho! A fine turn-out; that'll make the folk stare!" said the Auvergnat.

"A coach like the one that runs to Beaumont, I can tell you! Brand new, painted in red and gold, enough to make the Touchards burst with envy! It will take three horses. I have found a fellow to Rougeot, and Bichette will trot unicorn like a good 'un. Come, harness up," said Pierrotin, who was looking toward the Porte Saint-Denis while cramming his short pipe with tobacco, "I see a lady out there, and a little man with bundles under his arm. They are looking for the Silver Lion, for they would have nothing to say to the *coucous* on the stand. Hey-day, I seem to know the lady for a customer."

"You often get home filled up after starting empty," said his man.

"But no parcels!" replied Pierrotin. "By the mass! What devil's luck!"

And Pierrotin sat down on one of the enormous curbstones which protected the lower part of the wheels from the friction of the walls, but he wore an anxious and thoughtful look that was not usual with him. This dialogue, apparently so trivial, had stirred up serious anxieties at the bottom of Pierrotin's

heart. And what could trouble Pierrotin's heart but the thought of a handsome coach? To cut a dash on the road to rival the Touchards, extend his service, carry passengers who might congratulate him on the increased convenience due to the improvements in coach-building, instead of hearing constant complaints of his drags, this was Pierrotin's laudable ambition.

Now the worthy man, carried away by his desire to triumph over his colleague, and to induce him some day perhaps to leave him without a competitor on the road to l'Isle-Adam, had overstrained his resources. He had ordered his coach from Farry, Breilmann & Co., the makers who had lately introduced English coach-springs in the place of the swan's-neck and other old-fashioned French springs; but these hard-hearted and mistrustful makers would only deliver the vehicle for ready cash. Not caring, indeed, to build a conveyance so unsalable if it were left on their hands, these shrewd tradesmen had not undertaken the job till Pierrotin had paid them two thousand francs on account. To satisfy their justifiable requirements, Pierrotin had exhausted his savings and his credit. He had bled his wife, his father-in-law, and his friends. He had been to look at the superb vehicle the day before in the painter's shop; it was ready, and waiting to take the road, but in order to see it there on the following day he must pay up.

Hence Pierrotin was in need of a thousand francs! Being in debt to the innkeeper for stable-room, he dared not borrow the sum of him. For lack of this thousand francs, he risked losing the two thousand already paid in advance, to say nothing of five hundred, the cost of Rougeot the second, and three hundred for new harness, for which, however, he had three months' credit. And yet, urged by the wrath of despair and the folly of vanity, he had just declared that his coach would start on the morrow, Sunday. In paying the fifteen hundred francs on account of the two thousand five hundred,

he had hoped that the coachmakers' feelings might be touched so far that they would let him have the vehicle; but, after three minutes' reflection, he exclaimed—

"No, no! they are sharks, perfect skinflints. Supposing I were to apply to Monsieur Moreau, the steward at Presles—he is such a good fellow, that he would, perhaps, take my note of hand at six months' date," thought he, struck by a new idea.

At this instant, a servant out of livery, carrying a leather trunk, on coming across from the Touchards' office, where he had failed to find a place vacant on the Chambly coach starting at one o'clock, said to the driver—

"Pierrotin? Is that you?"

"What then?" said Pierrotin.

"If you can wait less than a quarter of an hour, you can carry my master; if not, I will take his portmanteau back again, and he must make the best of a chaise off the stand."

"I will wait two—three-quarters of an hour, and five minutes more to that, my lad," said Pierrotin, with a glance at the smart little leather trunk, neatly strapped, and fastened with a brass lock engraved with a coat-of-arms.

"Very good, then, there you are," said the man, relieving his shoulder of the trunk, which Pierrotin lifted, weighed in his hand, and scrutinized.

"Here," said he to his stable-boy, "pack it round with soft hay, and put it in the boot at the back. There is no name on it," said he.

"There are monseigneur's arms," replied the servant.

"Monseigneur?—worth his weight in gold! Come and have a short drink," said Pierrotin, with a wink, as he led the way to the Café of the Echiquiers. "Two absinthes," cried he to the waiter as they went in. "But who is your master, and where is he bound? I never saw you before," said Pierrotin to the servant as they clinked glasses.

"And for very good reasons," replied the footman. "My master does not go your way once a year, and always then in

his own carriage. He prefers the road by the Orge valley, where he has the finest park near Paris, a perfect Versailles, a family estate, from which he takes his name. Don't you know Monsieur Moreau?"

"The steward at Presles?" said Pierrotin.

"Well, Monsieur le Comte is going to spend two days at Presles."

"Oh, ho, then my passenger is the Comte de Sérizy!" cried Pierrotin.

"Yes, my man, no less. But, mind, he sends strict orders. If you have any of the people belonging to your parts in your chaise, do not mention the count's name; he wants to travel *incognito*, and desired me to tell you so, and promise you a handsome tip."

"Hah! and has this hide-and-seek journey anything to do, by any chance, with the bargain that old Léger, the farmer at les Moulineaux, wants to make?"

"I don't know," replied the man; "but the fat is in the fire. Last evening I was sent to the stables to order the chaise *à la Daumont*,* by seven this morning, to drive to Presles; but at seven my master countermanded it. Augustin, his valet, ascribes this change of plan to the visit of a lady, who seemed to have come from the country."

"Can any one have had anything to say against Monsieur Moreau? The best of men, the most honest, the king of men, I say! He might have made a deal more money than he has done if he had chosen, take my word for it——"

"Then he was very foolish," said the servant sententiously.

"Then Monsieur de Sérizy is going to live at Presles at last? The castle has been refurnished and done up," said Pierrotin after a pause. "Is it true that two hundred thousand francs have been spent on it already?"

"If you or I had the money that has been spent there, we could set up in the world. If Madame la Comtesse goes

* A carriage known by this name.

down there, the Moreaus' fun will be over," added the man, with mysterious significance.

"A good man is Monsieur Moreau," repeated Pierrotin, who was still thinking of borrowing the thousand francs from the steward; "a man that makes his men work, and does not spare them; who gets all the profit out of the land, and for his master's benefit too. A good man! He often comes to Paris, and always by my coach; he gives me something handsome for myself, and always has a lot of parcels to and fro. Three or four a day, sometimes for monsieur and sometimes for madame; a bill of fifty francs a month, say, only on the carrier's score. Though madame holds her head a little above her place, she is fond of her children; I take them to school for her and bring them home again. And she always gives me five francs, and your biggest pot would not do more. And whenever I have any one from them or to them, I always drive right up to the gates of the house—I could not do less, now, could I?"

"They say that Monsieur Moreau had no more than a thousand crowns in the world when Monsieur le Comte put him in as land steward at Presles," said the loquacious man-servant.

"But in seventeen years' time—since 1806—the man must have made something," replied Pierrotin.

"To be sure," said the servant, shaking his head. "And masters are queer too. I hope, for Moreau's sake, that he has feathered his nest."

"I often deliver hampers at your house in the Chaussée-d'Antin," said Pierrotin, "but I have never had the privilege of seeing either the master or his lady."

"Monsieur le Comte is a very good sort," said the man confidentially; "but if he wants you to hold your tongue about his *cognito*, there is a screw loose you may depend. At least, that is what we think at home. For why else should he counterorder the traveling carriage? Why ride in a public

chaise? A peer of France might take a hired chaise, you would think."

"A hired chaise might cost him as much as forty francs for the double journey; for, I can tell, if you don't know our road, it is fit for squirrels to climb. Everlastingly up and down!" said Pierrotin. "Peer of France or tradesman, everybody looks at both sides of a five-franc piece. If this trip means mischief to Monsieur Moreau—dear, dear, I should be vexed indeed if any harm came to him. By the mass! Can no way be found of warning him? For he is a real good 'un, an honest sort, the king of men, I say——"

"Pooh! Monsieur le Comte is much attached to Monsieur Moreau," said the other. "But if you will take a bit of good advice from me, mind your own business, and let him mind his. We all have quite enough to do to take care of ourselves. You just do what you are asked to do; all the more because it does not pay to play fast and loose with monseigneur. Add to that, the count is generous. If you oblige him that much," said the man, measuring off the nail of one finger, "he will reward you that much," and he stretched out his arm.

This judicious hint, and yet more the illustrative figure, coming from a man so high in office as the Comte de Sérizy's second footman, had the effect of cooling Pierrotin's zeal for the steward of Presles.

"Well, good-day, Monsieur Pierrotin," said the man.

A short sketch of the previous history of the Comte de Sérizy and his steward is here necessary to explain the little drama about to be played in Pierrotin's coach.

Monsieur Hugret de Sérizy is descended in a direct line from the famous Président Hugret, ennobled by Francis the First. They bear as arms *party per pale or and sable, an orle and two lozenges counterchanged.* Motto, *i semper melius eris,* which, like the two distaffs assumed as supporters,

shows the modest pretense of the citizen class at a time when each rank of society had its own place in the State, and also the artlessness of the age in the punning motto, where *eris* with the *I* at the beginning, and the final *S* of *melius*, represent the name, Sérisi, of the estate, whence the title.

The present count's father was a president of Parliament before the Revolution. He himself, a member of the High Council of State in 1787, at the early age of two-and-twenty, was favorably known for certain reports on some delicate matters. He did not emigrate during the Revolution, but remained on his lands of Sérizy, near Arpajon, where the respect felt for his father protected him from molestation.

After spending a few years in nursing the old president, whom he lost in 1794, he was elected to the Council of Five Hundred, and took up his legislative functions as a distraction from his grief.

After the eighteenth Brumaire, Monsieur de Sérizy became the object—as did all the families connected with the old Parliament—of the First Consul's attentions, and by him he was appointed a councilor of State to reorganize one of the most disorganized branches of the administration. Thus this scion of a great historical family became one of the most important wheels in the vast and admirable machinery due to Napoleon. The State councilor ere long left his department to be made a minister. The Emperor created him count and senator, and he was proconsul to two different kingdoms in succession.

In 1806, at the age of forty, he married the sister of the one-time Marquis de Ronquerolles, and widow, at the age of twenty, of Gaubert, one of the most distinguished of the Republican generals, who left her all his wealth. This match, suitable in point of rank, doubled the Comte de Sérizy's already considerable fortune; he was now the brother-in-law of the *ci-devant* Marquis de Rouvre, whom Napoleon created count and appointed to be his chamberlain.

In 1814, worn out with incessant work, Monsieur de Sérizy whose broken health needed rest, gave up all his appointments, left the district of which Napoleon had made him governor, and came to Paris, where the Emperor was compelled by ocular evidence to concede his claims. This indefatigable master, who could not believe in fatigue in other people, had at first supposed the necessity that prompted the Comte de Sérizy to be simple defection. Though the senator was not in disgrace, it was said that he had cause for complaint of Napoleon. Consequently, when the Bourbons came back, Louis XVIII., whom Monsieur de Sérizy acknowledged as his legitimate sovereign, granted to the senator, now a peer of France, the highly confidential post of steward of his privy purse, and made him a minister of State.

On the 20th March, Monsieur de Sérizy did not follow the King to Ghent; he made it known to Napoleon that he remained faithful to the House of Bourbon, and accepted no peerage during the Hundred Days, but spent that brief reign on his estate of Sérizy. After the Emperor's second fall, the count naturally resumed his seat in the Privy Council, was one of the Council of State, and liquidator on behalf of France in the settlement of the indemnities demanded by foreign powers.

He had no love of personal magnificence, no ambition even, but exerted great influence in public affairs. No important political step was ever taken without his being consulted, but he never went to court, and was seldom seen in his own drawing-room. His noble life, devoted to work from the first, ended by being perpetual work and nothing else. The count rose at four in the morning in all seasons, worked till midday, then took up his duties as a peer, or as vice-president of the Council, and went to bed at nine.

Monsieur de Sérizy had long worn the grand cross of the Legion of Honor; he also had the orders of the Golden Fleece, of Saint Andrew of Russia, of the Prussian Eagle ; in

short, almost every order of the European Courts. No one was less conspicuous or more valuable than he in the world of politics. As may be supposed, to a man of his temper the flourish of court favor and worldly success were a matter of indifference.

But no man, unless he is a priest, can live such a life without some strong motive; and his mysterious conduct had its key—a cruel one. The count had loved his wife before he married her, and in him this passion had withstood all the domestic discomforts of matrimony with a widow who remained mistress of herself, after as well as before her second marriage, and who took all the more advantage of her liberty because Monsieur de Sérizy indulged her as a mother indulges a spoilt child. Incessant work served him as a shield against his heart-felt woes, buried with the care that a man engaged in politics takes to hide such secrets. And he fully understood how ridiculous jealousy would be in the eyes of the world, which would certainly never have admitted the possibility of conjugal passion in a time-worn official.

How was it that his wife had thus bewitched him from the first days of marriage? Why had he suffered in those early days without taking his revenge? Why did he no longer dare to be revenged? And why, deluded by hope, had he allowed time to slip away? By what means had his young, pretty, clever wife reduced him to subjection? The answer to these questions would require a long story, out of place in this "Scene," and women, if not men, may be able to guess it. At the same time, it may be observed that the count's incessant work and many sorrows had unfortunately done much to deprive him of the advantages indispensable to a man who has to compete with unfavorable comparisons. The saddest, perhaps, of all the count's secrets was the fact that his wife's repulsion was partly justified by ailments which he owed entirely to overwork. Kind, nay, more than kind, to his wife, he made her mistress of herself and house; she received all Paris, she went

into the country, or she came back again, precisely as though she were still a widow; he took care of her money, and supplied her luxuries as if he had been her agent.

The countess held her husband in the highest esteem; indeed, she liked his turn of wit. Her approbation could give him pleasure, and thus she could do what she liked with the poor man by sitting and chatting with him for an hour. Like the great nobles of former days, the count so effectually protected his wife that he would have regarded any slur cast on her reputation as an unpardonable insult to himself. The world greatly admired his character, and Madame de Sérizy owed much to her husband. Any other woman, even though she belonged to so distinguishd a family as that of Ronquerolles, might have found herself disgraced for ever. The countess was very ungrateful—but charming in her ingratitude. Yet from time to time she would pour a balm on the count's heart-wounds.

We must now explain the cause of the minister's hurried journey and wish to remain unknown.

A rich farmer of Beaumont-sur-Oise, named Léger, held a farm of which the various portions were all fractions of the estate owned by the count, thus impairing the splendid property of Presles. The farm-lands belonged to a townsman of Beaumont-sur-Oise, one Margueron. The lease he had granted to Léger in 1799, at a time when the advance since made in agriculture could not be foreseen, was nearly run out, and the owner had refused Léger's terms for renewing it. Long since, Monsieur de Sérizy, wanting to be quit of the worry and squabbling that come of such inclosed plots, had hoped to be able to buy the farm, having heard that Monsieur Margueron's sole ambition was to see his only son, a modest official, promoted to be collector of the revenue at Senlis.

Moreau had hinted to his master that he had a dangerous rival in the person of old Léger. The farmer, knowing that he could run up the land to a high price by selling it piece-

meal to the count, was capable of paying a sum so high as to outbid the profit derivable from the collectorship to be bestowed on the younger Margueron. Two days since, the count, who wanted to have done with the matter, had sent for his notary, Alexandre Crottat, and Derville his solicitor, to inquire into the state of the affair. Though Crottat and Derville cast doubts on the steward's zeal—and, indeed, it was a puzzling letter from him that gave rise to this consultation—the count defended Moreau, who had, he said, served him faithfully for seventeen years.

"Well," Derville replied, "I can only advise your lordship to go in person to Presles and ask this Margueron to dinner. Crottat will send down his head-clerk with a form of sale ready drawn out, leaving blank pages or lines for the insertion of descriptions of the plots and the necessary titles. Your excellency will do well to go provided with a cheque for part of the purchase-money in case of need, and not to forget the letter appointing the son to the collectorship at Senlis. If you do not strike on the nail, the farm will slip through your fingers. You have no idea, Monsieur le Comte, of peasant cunning. Given a peasant on one side and a diplomatist on the other, the peasant will win the day."

Crottat confirmed this advice, which, from the footman's report to Pierrotin, the count had evidently adopted. On the day before, the count had sent a note to Moreau by the Beaumont diligence, desiring him to invite Margueron to dinner, as he meant to come to some conclusion concerning the Moulineaux farm-lands.

Before all this, the count had given orders for the restoration of the living-rooms at Presles, and Monsieur Grindot, a fashionable architect, went down there once a week. So, while treating for his acquisition, Monsieur de Sérizy proposed inspecting the works at the same time and the effect of the new decorations. He intended to give his wife a surprise by taking her to Presles, and the restoration of the castle was

a matter of pride to him. What event, then, could have happened that the count, who, only the day before, was intending to go overtly to Presles, should now wish to travel thither *incognito*, in Pierrotin's chaise?

Here a few words are necessary as to the antecedent history of the steward at Presles.

This man, Moreau, was the son of a proctor in a provincial town, who at the time of the Revolution had been made a magistrate (*procureur-syndic*) at Versailles. In this position the elder Moreau had been largely instrumental in saving the property and life of the Sérizys, father and son. Citizen Moreau had belonged to the party of Danton; Robespierre, implacable in revenge, hunted him down, caught him, and had him executed at Versailles. The younger Moreau, inheriting his father's doctrines and attachments, got mixed up in one of the conspiracies plotted against the First Consul on his accession to power. Then Monsieur de Sérizy, anxious to pay a debt of gratitude, succeeded in effecting Moreau's escape after he was condemned to death; in 1804 he asked and obtained his pardon; he at first found him a place in his office, and afterward made him his secretary and manager of his private affairs.

Some time after his patron's marriage, Moreau fell in love with the countess' maid and married her. To avoid the unpleasantly false position in which he was placed by this union —and there were many such at the Imperial Court—he asked to be appointed land steward at Presles, where his wife could play the lady, and where, in a neighborhood of small folk, they would neither of them be hurt in their own conceits. The count needed a faithful agent at Presles, because his wife preferred to reside at Sérizy, which is no more than five leagues from Paris. Moreau was familiar with all his affairs, and he was intelligent; before the Revolution he had studied law under his father. So Monsieur de Sérizy said to him—

"You will not make a fortune, for you have tied a millstone

around your neck; but you will be well off, for I will provide for that."

And, in fact, the count gave Moreau a fixed salary of a thousand crowns, and a pretty little lodge to live in beyond the outbuildings; he also allowed him so many cords of wood a year out of the plantations for fuel, so much straw, oats, and hay for two horses, and a certain proportion of the payments in kind. A sub-prefect is less well off.

During the first eight years of his stewardship, Moreau managed the estate conscientiously, and took an interest in his work. The count, when he came down to inspect the domain, to decide on purchases or sanction improvements, was struck by Moreau's faithful service, and showed his approbation by handsome presents. But when Moreau found himself the father of a girl—his third child—he was so completely established at his ease at Presles that he forgot how greatly he was indebted to Monsieur de Sérizy for such unusually liberal advantages. Thus in 1816, the steward, who had hitherto done no more than help himself freely, accepted from a wood-merchant a bonus of twenty-five thousand francs, with the promise of a rise, for signing an agreement for twelve years allowing the contractor to cut fire-logs in the woods of Presles. Moreau argued thus: He had no promise of a pension; he was the father of a family; the count certainly owed him so much by way of premium on nearly ten years' service. He was already lawfully possessed of sixty thousand francs in savings; with this sum added to it he could purchase for a hundred and twenty thousand a farm in the vicinity of Champagne, a hamlet on the right bank of the Oise a little way above l'Isle-Adam.

The stir of politics hindered the count and the country-folk from taking cognizance of this investment; the business was indeed transacted in the name of Madame Moreau, who was supposed to have come into some money from an old great-aunt in her own part of the country, at Saint-Lô.

When once the steward had tasted the delicious fruits of ownership, though his conduct was still apparently honesty itself, he never missed an opportunity of adding to his clandestine wealth; the interests of his three children served as an emollient to quench the ardors of his honesty, and we must do him the justice to say that while he was open to a bribe, took care of himself in concluding a bargain, and strained his rights to the last point, he was still honest in the eye of the law; no proof could have been brought in support of any accusation. According to the jurisprudence of the least dishonest of Paris cooks, he shared with his master the profits due to his sharp practice. This way of making a fortune was a matter of conscience—nothing more. Energetic, and fully alive to the count's interests, Moreau looked out all the more keenly for good opportunities of driving a bargain, since he was sure of a handsome douceur. Presles was worth sixty-two thousand francs in cash rents; and throughout the district, for ten leagues round, the saying was, "Monsieur de Sérizy has a second self in Moreau!"

Moreau, like a prudent man, had, since 1817, invested his salary and his profits year by year in the Funds, feathering his nest in absolute secrecy. He had refused various business speculations on the plea of want of money, and affected poverty so well to the count that he had obtained two scholarships for his boys at the Collége Henri IV. And, at this moment, Moreau owned a hundred and twenty thousand francs in reduced consols, then paying five per cent., and quoted at eighty. These unacknowledged hundred and twenty thousand francs, and his farm at Champagne, to which he had made additions, amounted to a fortune of about two hundred and eighty thousand francs, yielding an income of sixteen thousand francs a year.

This, then, was the steward's position at the time when the count wished to purchase the farm of les Moulineaux, of which the possession had become indispensable to his comfort. This

farm comprehended ninety-six plots of land, adjoining, bordering, and marching with the estate of Presles, in many cases indeed completely surrounded by the count's property, like a square in the middle of a chess-board, to say nothing of the dividing hedges and ditches, which gave rise to constant disputes when a tree was to be cut down if it stood on debatable ground. Any other Minister of State would have fought twenty lawsuits a year over the lands of les Moulineaux.

Old Léger wanted to buy them only to sell to the count; and to make the thirty or forty thousand francs of profit he hoped for, he had long been endeavoring to come to terms with Moreau. Only three days before this critical Saturday, Farmer Léger, driven by press of circumstances, had, standing out in the fields, clearly demonstrated to the steward how he could invest the Comte de Sérizy's money at two and a half per cent. in purchasing other plots; that is to say, could, as usual, seem to be serving the count's interests while pocketing the bonus of forty thousand francs offered him on the transaction.

"And on my honor," said the steward to his wife as they went to bed that evening, "if I can make fifty thousand francs on the purchase of les Moulineaux—for the count will give me ten thousand at least—we will retire to l'Isle-Adam, to the Pavillon de Nogent."

This pavilion is a charming little house built for a mistress by the Prince de Conti in a style of prodigal elegance and with every convenience.

"I should like that," said his wife. "The Dutchman who has been living there has done it up very handsomely, and he will let us have it for thirty thousand francs, since he is obliged to go back to the Indies."

"It is but a stone's throw from Champagne," Moreau went on. "I have hopes of being able to buy the farm and mill at Mours for a hundred thousand francs. We should thus have ten thousand francs a year out of land, one of the pret-

tiest places in all the valley, close to our farm lands, and six thousand francs a year still in the Funds."

"And why should you not apply to be appointed justice of the peace at l'Isle-Adam? It would give us importance and fifteen hundred francs a year more."

"Yes, I have thought of that."

In this frame of mind, on learning that his patron was coming to Presles, and wished him to invite Margueron to dinner on Saturday, Moreau at once sent off a messenger, who delivered a note to the count's valet too late in the evening for it to be delivered to Monsieur de Sérizy; but Augustin laid it, as was usual, on his master's desk. In this letter Moreau begged the count not to take so much trouble; to leave the matter to his management. By his account Margueron no longer wished to sell the lands in one lot, but talked of dividing the farm into ninety-six plots. This, at any rate, he must be persuaded to give up; and perhaps, said the steward, it might be necessary to find some one to lend his name as a screen.

Now, everybody has enemies. The steward of Presles and his wife had given offense to a retired officer named de Reybert and his wife. From stinging words and pin-pricks they had come to daggers drawn. Monsieur de Reybert breathed nothing but vengeance; he aimed at getting Moreau deposed from his place and filling it himself. These two ideas were twins. Hence the agent's conduct, narrowly watched for two years past, had no secrets from the Reyberts. At the very time when Moreau was dispatching his letter to Monsieur de Sérizy, Reybert had sent his wife to Paris. Madame de Reybert so strongly insisted on seeing the count, that, being refused at nine in the evening, when he was going to bed, she was shown into his study by seven o'clock next morning.

"Monseigneur," said she to the Minister, "my husband and I are incapable of writing an anonymous letter. I am Madame de Reybert, *née* de Corroy. My husband has a pen-

sion of no more than six hundred francs a year, and we live at Presles, where your land steward exposes us to insult upon insult though we are gentlefolk. Monsieur de Reybert, who has no love of intrigue—far from it!—retired as a Captain of Artillery in 1816 after twenty years' service, but he never came under the Emperor's eye, Monsieur le Comte; and you must know how slowly promotion came to those who did not serve under the Master himself; and, beside, my husband's honesty and plain speaking did not please his superiors.

"For three years my husband has been watching your steward for the purpose of depriving him of his place. We are outspoken, you see. Moreau has made us his enemies, and we have kept our eyes open. I have come therefore to tell you that you are being tricked in this business of the Moulineaux farm lands. You are to be cheated of a hundred thousand francs, which will be shared between the notary, Léger, and Moreau. You have given orders that Margueron is to be asked to dinner, and you intend to go to Presles to-morrow; but Margueron will be ill, and Léger is so confident of getting the farm that he is in Paris realizing enough capital. As we have enlightened you, if you want an honest agent, engage my husband. Though of noble birth, he will serve you as he served his country. Your steward has made and saved two hundred and fifty thousand francs, so he is not to be pitied."

The count thanked Madame de Reybert very coldly and answered her with curt speeches, for he greatly detested an informer; still, as he remembered Derville's suspicions, he was shaken in his mind, and then his eye fell on Moreau's letter; he read it, and in those assurances of devotion, and the respectful remonstrances as to the want of confidence implied by his intention of conducting this business himself, he saw the truth about Moreau.

"Corruption has come with wealth, as usual," said he to himself.

He had questioned Madame de Reybert less to ascertain the details than to give himself time to study her, and he had then written a line to his notary to desire him not to send his clerk to Presles, but to go there himself and meet him at dinner.

"If you should have formed a bad opinion of me, Monsieur le Comte, for the step I have taken unknown to my husband," said Madame Reybert in conclusion, "you must at least be convinced that we have obtained our knowledge as concerning your steward by perfectly natural means; the most sensitive conscience can find nothing to blame us for."

Madame de Reybert *née* de Corroy held herself as straight as a pikestaff.

The count's rapid survey took in a face pitted by the small-pox till it looked like a colander, a lean, flat figure, a pair of eager, light-colored eyes, fair curls flattened on an anxious brow, a faded green silk bonnet lined with pink, a white stuff dress with lilac spots, and kid shoes. Monsieur de Sérizy discerned in her the wife of the poor gentleman; some Puritanical soul subscribing to the French "Courrier," glowing with virtue, but very well aware of the advantages of a fixed place, and coveting it.

"A pension of six hundred francs, you said?" replied the count, answering himself rather than Madame de Reybert's communication.

"Yes, Monsieur le Comte."

"You were a de Corroy?"

"Yes, monsieur, of a noble family of the Messin country, my husband's country."

"And in what regiment was Monsieur de Reybert?"

"In the 7th Artillery."

"Good!" said the count, writing down the number.

He thought he might very well place the management of the estate in the hands of a retired officer, concerning whom he could get the fullest information at the War Office.

"Madame," he went on, ringing for his valet, "return to Presles with my notary, who is to arrange to dine there to-night, and to whom I have written a line of introduction; this is his address. I am going to Presles myself, but secretly, and will let Monsieur de Reybert know when to call on me."

So it was not a false alarm that had startled Pierrotin with the news of Monsieur de Sérizy's journey in a public chaise, and the warning to keep his name a secret; he foresaw imminent danger about to fall on one of his best customers.

On coming out of the café, Pierrotin perceived, at the gate of the Silver Lion, the woman and youth whom his acumen had recognized as travelers; for the lady, with outstretched neck and an anxious face, was evidently looking for him. This lady, in a re-dyed black silk, a gray bonnet, and an old French cashmere shawl, shod in open-work silk stockings and kid shoes, held a flat straw basket and a bright blue umbrella. She had once been handsome, and now looked about forty; and her blue eyes, bereft of the sparkle that happiness might have given them, showed that she had long since renounced the world. Her dress no less than her person betrayed a mother entirely given up to her housekeeping and her son. If the bonnet-strings were shabby, the shape of it dated from three years back. Her shawl was fastened with a large broken needle, converted into a pin by means of a head of sealing-wax.

This person was impatiently awaiting Pierrotin to commend her son to his care; the lad was probably traveling alone for the first time, and she had accompanied him as far as the coach-office, as much out of mistrust as out of motherly devotion. The son was in a way supplementary to his mother; and without the mother the son would have seemed less comprehensible. While the mother was content to display darned gloves, the son wore an olive-green overcoat, with sleeves rather short at the wrists, showing that he was still growing, as lads

do between eighteen and nineteen. And his blue trousers, mended by the mother, showed that they had been new-seated whenever the tails of his coat parted maliciously behind.

"Do not twist your gloves up in that way," she was saying when Pierrotin appeared, "you wear them shabby. Are you the driver? Ah! it is you, Pierrotin!" she went on, leaving her son for a moment and taking the coachman aside.

"All well, Madame Clapart?" said Pierrotin, with an expression on his face of mingled respect and familiarity.

"Yes, Pierrotin. Take good care of my Oscar; he is traveling alone for the first time."

"Oh! if he is going alone to Monsieur Moreau's——?" said Pierrotin, to discover whether it were really there that the young fellow was being sent.

"Yes," said the mother.

"Has Madame Moreau a liking for him, then?" said the man, with a knowing look.

"Oh! it will not be all roses for the poor boy; but his future prospects make it absolutely necessary that he should go."

Pierrotin was struck by this remark, and he did not like to confide his doubts concerning the steward to Madame Clapart; while she, on her part, dared not offend her son by giving Pierrotin such instructions as would put the coachman in the position of a mentor.

During this brief hesitation on both sides, under cover of a few remarks on the weather, the roads, the stopping-places on the way, it will not be superfluous to explain the circumstances which had thrown Pierrotin and Madame Clapart together and given rise to their few words of confidential talk. Frequently—that is to say, three or four times a month—Pierrotin, on his way to Paris, found the steward waiting at la Cave, and as the coach came up he beckoned to a gardener, who then helped Pierrotin to place on the coach one or two baskets full of such fruit and vegetables as were in season, with fowls,

eggs, butter, or game. Moreau always paid the carriage himself, and gave him money enough to pay the excise duties at the barrier, if the baskets contained anything subject to the *octroi.** These hampers and baskets never bore any label. The first time, and once for all, the steward had given the shrewd driver Madame Clapart's address by word of mouth, desiring him never to trust anybody else with these precious parcels. Pierrotin, dreaming of an intrigue between some pretty girl and the agent, had gone as directed to No. 7 Rue de la Cerisaie, near the Arsenal, where he had seen the Madame Clapart above described, instead of the fair young creature he had expected to find.

Carriers, in the course of their day's work, are initiated into many homes and trusted with many secrets; but the chances of the social system—a sort of deputy providence—having ordained that they should have no education or be unendowed with the gift of observation, it follows that they are not dangerous. Nevertheless, after many months Pierrotin could not account to himself for the friendship between Madame Clapart and Monsieur Moreau, from what little he saw of the household in the Rue de la Cerisaie. Though rents were not at that time high in the neighborhood of the Arsenal, Madame Clapart lived on the fourth floor on the inner side of a courtyard, in a house which had been in its day the residence of some magnate, at a period when the highest nobility in the kingdom lived on what had been the site of the Palais des Tournelles and the Hôtel Saint-Paul. Toward the close of the sixteenth century the great families spread themselves over vast plots previously occupied by the King's Palace Gardens, of which the record survives in the names of the streets, Rue de la Cerisaie, Rue Beautreillis, Rue des Lions, and so on. This apartment, of which every room was paneled with old wainscot, consisted of three rooms in a row—a dining-room, a drawing-room, and a bed-

* Collectors of duties payable on goods brought into the cities.

room. Above were the kitchen and Oscar's room. Fronting the door that opened on to the landing was the door of another room at an angle to these, in a sort of square tower of massive stone built out all the way up, and containing beside a wooden staircase. This tower room was where Moreau slept whenever he spent a night in Paris.

Pierrotin deposited the baskets in the first room, where he could see six straw-bottomed, walnut-wood chairs, a table, and a sideboard; narrow russet-brown curtains screened the windows. Afterward, when he was admitted to the drawing-room, he found it fitted with old furniture of the time of the Empire, much worn; and there was no more of it at all than the landlord would insist upon as a guarantee for the rent. The carved panels, painted coarsely in distemper of a dull pinkish white, and in such a way as to fill up the mouldings and thicken the scrolls and figures, far from being ornamental, were positively depressing. The floor, which was never waxed, was as dingy as the boards of a schoolroom. If the carrier by chance disturbed Monsieur and Madame Clapart at a meal, the plates, the glasses, the most trifling things revealed miserable poverty; they had plate, it is true, but the dishes and tureen, chipped and riveted like those of the very poor, were truly pitiable. Monsieur Clapart, in a dirty short coat, with squalid slippers on his feet, and always green spectacles to protect his eyes, as he took off a shabby peaked cap, five years old at least, showed a high-pointed skull, with a few dirty locks hanging about it, which a poet would have declined to call hair. This colorless creature looked a coward, and was probably a tyrant.

In this dismal apartment, facing north, with no outlook but on a vine nailed out on the opposite wall, and a well in the corner of the yard, Madame Clapart gave herself the airs of a queen, and trod like a woman who could not go out on foot. Often, as she thanked Pierrotin, she would give him a look that might have touched the heart of a looker-on; now and

again she would slip a twelve-sou piece into his hand. Her voice in speech was very sweet. Oscar was unknown to Pierrotin, for the boy had but just left school, and he had never seen him at home.

This was the sad story which Pierrotin never could have guessed, not even after questioning the gatekeeper's wife, as he sometimes did—for the woman knew nothing beyond the fact that the Claparts' rent was but two hundred and fifty francs; that they only had a woman in to help for a few hours in the morning; that madame would sometimes do her own little bit of washing, and paid for every letter as it came as if she were afraid to let the account stand.

There is no such thing—or, rather, there is very rarely such a thing—as a criminal who is bad all through. How much more rare it must be to find a man who is dishonest all through! He may make up his accounts to his own advantage rather than his master's, or pull as much hay as possible to his end of the manger; but, even while making a little fortune by illicit means, few men deny themselves the luxury of some good action. If only out of curiosity, as a contrast, or perhaps by chance, every man has known his hour of generosity; he may speak of it as a mistake, and never repeat it; still, once or twice in his life, he will have sacrificed to well-doing, as the veriest lout will sacrifice to the Graces. If Moreau's sins can be forgiven him, will it not be for the sake of his constancy in helping a poor woman of whose favors he had once been proud, and under whose roof he had found refuge when in danger of his life?

This woman, famous at the time of the Directoire for her connection with one of the five kings of the day, married, under his powerful patronage, a contractor who made millions, and then was ruined by Napoleon in 1802. This man, named Husson, was driven mad by his sudden fall from opulence to poverty; he threw himself into the Seine, leaving his handsome wife expecting a child. Moreau, who was on very inti-

mate terms with Madame Husson, was at the time under sentence of death, so he could not marry the widow, and was in fact obliged to leave France for a time. Madame Husson, only two-and-twenty, in her utter poverty, married an official named Clapart, a young man of twenty-seven—a man of promise, it was said. Heaven preserve women from handsome men of promise! In those days officials rose rapidly from humble beginnings, for the Emperor had an eye for capable men. But Clapart, vulgarly handsome, indeed, had no brains. Believing Madame Husson to be very rich, he had affected a great passion; he was simply a burden to her, never able, either then or later, to satisfy the habits she had acquired in her days of opulence. Clapart filled—badly enough—a small place in the Exchequer Office at a salary of not more than eighteen hundred francs a year.

When Moreau came back to be with the Comte de Sérizy and heard of Madame Husson's desperate plight, he succeeded, before his own marriage, in getting her a place as woman of the bedchamber in attendance on MADAME, the Emperor's mother. But in spite of such powerful patronage, Clapart could never get on; his incapacity was too immediately obvious.

In 1815 the brilliant Aspasia of the Directory, ruined by the Emperor's overthrow, was left with nothing to live on but the salary of twelve hundred francs attached to a clerkship in the municipal offices, which the Comte de Sérizy's influence secured for Clapart. Moreau, now the only friend of a woman whom he had known as the possessor of millions, obtained for Oscar Husson a half-scholarship held by the Municipality of Paris in the Collége Henri IV., and he sent to the Rue de la Cerisaie, by Pierrotin, all he could decently offer to the impoverished lady.

Oscar was his mother's one hope, her very life. The only fault to be found with the poor woman was her excessive fondness for this boy—his stepfather's utter aversion. Oscar was,

unluckily, gifted with a depth of silliness which his mother could never suspect, in spite of Clapart's ironical remarks. This silliness—or, to be accurate, this bumptiousness—disturbed Monsieur Moreau so greatly that he had begged Madame Clapart to send the lad to him for a month that he might judge for himself what line of life he would prove fit for. The steward had some thought of introducing Oscar one day to the count as his successor.

But, to give God and the devil their due, it may here be observed as an excuse for Oscar's preposterous conceit that he had been born under the roof of the Emperor's mother; in his earliest years his eyes had been dazzled by Imperial splendor. His impressible imagination had no doubt retained the memory of those magnificent spectacles, and an image of that golden time of festivities, with a dream of seeing them again. The boastfulness common to schoolboys, all possessed by desire to shine at the expense of their fellows, had in him been exaggerated by these memories of his childhood; and at home perhaps his mother was rather too apt to recall with complacency the days when she had been a queen of Paris under the Directory. Oscar, who had just finished his studies, had, no doubt, often been obliged to assert himself as superior to the humiliations which the pupils who pay are always ready to inflict on the "charity-boys" when the scholars are not physically strong enough to impress them with their superiority.

This mixture of departed splendor and faded beauty, of affection resigned to poverty, of hope founded on this son, and maternal blindness, with the heroic endurance of suffering, made this mother one of the pathetic figures which in Paris deserve the notice of the observer.

Pierrotin, who, of course, could not know how truly Moreau was attached to this woman, and she, on her part, to the man who had protected her in 1797, and was now her only friend,

would not mention to her the suspicion that had dawned in his brain as to the danger which threatened Moreau. The manservant's ominous speech: "We have all enough to do to take care of ourselves," recurred to his mind with the instinct of obedience to those whom he designated as "first in the ranks." Also, at this moment Pierrotin felt as many darts stinging his brain as there are five-francs pieces in a thousand francs. A journey of seven leagues seemed, no doubt, quite an undertaking to this poor mother, who in all her fine lady existence had hardly ever been beyond the barrier; for Pierrotin's replies, "Yes, madame; no, madame——" again and again, plainly showed that the man was only anxious to escape from her too numerous and useless instructions.

"You will put the baggage where it cannot get wet if the weather should change?"

"I have a tarpaulin," said Pierrotin; "and, you see, madame, it is carefully packed away."

"Oscar, do not stay more than a fortnight, even if you are pressed," Madame Clapart went on, coming back to her son. "Do what you will, Madame Moreau will never take to you; beside, you must get home by the end of September. We are going to Belleville, you know, to your Uncle Cardot's."

"Yes, mamma."

"Above all," she added in a low tone, "never talk about servants. Always remember that Madame Moreau was a lady's maid——"

"Yes, mamma."

Oscar, like all young people whose conceit is touchy, seemed much put out by these admonitions delivered in the gateway of the Silver Lion.

"Well, good-by, mamma; we shall soon be off, the horse is put in."

The mother, forgeting that she was in the open street, hugged her Oscar, and taking a nice little roll out of her bag—

"Here," said she, "you were forgetting your bread and

chocolate. Once more, my dear boy, do not eat anything at the inns; you have to pay ten times the value for the smallest morsel."

Oscar wished his mother farther as she stuffed the roll and the chocolate into his pocket.

There were two witnesses to the scene, two young men a few years older than the newly fledged schoolboy, better dressed than he, and without their mothers, their demeanor, dress, and manner proclaiming the entire independence which is the end of every lad's desire while still under direct maternal government. To Oscar, at this moment, these two young fellows epitomized the World.

"*Mamma!* says he," cried one of these strangers, with a laugh.

The words reached Oscar's ears, and in an impulse of intense irritation he shouted out—

"Good-by, mother!"

It must be owned that Madame Clapart spoke rather too loud, and seemed to admit the passers-by to bear witness to her affectionate care.

"What on earth ails you, Oscar?" said the poor woman, much hurt. "I do not understand you," she added severely, fancying she could thus inspire him with respect—a common mistake with women who spoil their children. "Listen, dear Oscar," she went on, resuming her coaxing gentleness, "you have a propensity for talking to everybody, telling everything you know and everything you don't know—out of brag and a young man's foolish self-conceit. I beg you once more to bridle your tongue. You have not seen enough of life, my dearest treasure, to gauge the people you may meet, and there is nothing more dangerous than talking at random in a public conveyance. In a diligence well-bred persons keep silence."

The two young men, who had, no doubt, walked to the end of the yard and back, now made the sound of their boots heard once more under the gateway; they might have heard

this little lecture; and so, to be quit of his mother, Oscar took heroic measures, showing how much self-esteem can stimulate the inventive powers.

"Mamma," said he, "you are standing in a thorough draught, you will catch cold. Beside, I must take my place."

The lad had touched some tender chord, for his mother clasped him in her arms as if he were starting on some long voyage, and saw him into the chaise with tears in her eyes.

"Do not forget to give five francs to the servants," said she. "And write to me at least three times in the course of the fortnight. Behave discreetly, and remember all my instructions. You have enough linen to need none being washed. And, above all, remember all Monsieur Moreau's kindness; listen to him as to a father and follow his advice."

As he got into the chaise Oscar displayed a pair of blue stockings as his trousers slipped up, and the new seat to his trousers as his coat-tails parted. And the smile on the faces of the two young men, who did not fail to see these evidences of honorable poverty, was a fresh blow to Oscar's self-esteem.

"Oscar's place is No. 1," said Madame Clapart to Pierrotin. "Settle yourself in the corner," she went on, still gazing at her son with tender affection.

Oh! how much Oscar regretted his mother's beauty, spoilt by misfortune and sorrow, and the poverty and self-sacrifice that hindered her from being nicely dressed. One of the youngsters—the one who wore boots and spurs—nudged the other with his elbow to point out Oscar's mother, and the other twirled his mustache with an air, as much as to say: "A rather neat figure!"

"How am I to get rid of my mother?" thought Oscar, looking quite anxious.

"What is the matter?" said Madame Clapart.

Oscar pretended not to hear, the wretch! And, perhaps, under the circumstances, Madame Clapart showed want of tact; but an absorbing passion is so selfish!

"Georges, do you like traveling with children?" asked one of the young men of his friend.

"Yes, if they are weaned, and are called Oscar, and have chocolate to eat, my dear Amaury."

These remarks were exchanged in an undertone, leaving Oscar free to hear or not to hear them. His manner would show the young man what he might venture on with the lad to amuse himself in the course of the journey. Oscar would not hear. He looked round to see whether his mother, who weighed on him like a nightmare, was still waiting; but, indeed, he knew she was too fond of him to have deserted him yet. He not only involuntarily compared his traveling companion's dress with his own, but he also felt that his mother's costume counted for something as provoking the young men's mocking smile.

"If only they would go!" thought he.

Alas! Amaury had just said to Georges as he struck the wheel of the chaise with his cane—

"And you are prepared to trust your future career on board this frail vessel?"

"Need must!" replied Georges in a fateful tone.

Oscar heaved a sigh as he noted the youth's hat, cocked cavalierly over one ear to show a fine head of fair hair elaborately curled, while he, by his stepfather's orders, wore his black hair in a brush above his forehead, cut quite short like a soldier's. The vain boy's face was round and chubby, bright with the color of vigorous health; that of "Georges" was long, delicate, and pale. This young man had a broad brow, and his chest filled out a shawl-pattern vest. As Oscar admired his tightly fitting iron-gray trousers and his overcoat, sitting closely to the figure, with Brandenburg braiding and oval buttons, he felt as if the romantic stranger, blessed with so many advantages, were making an unfair display of his superiority, just as an ugly woman is offended by the mere sight of a beauty. The ring of his spurred boot-heels, which

the young man accentuated rather too much for Oscar's liking, went to the boy's heart. In short, Oscar was as uncomfortable in his clothes, home-made perhaps out of his stepfather's old ones, as the other enviable youth was satisfied in his.

"That fellow must have ten francs at least in his pocket," thought Oscar.

The stranger, happening to turn round, what were Oscar's feelings when he discerned a gold chain about his neck—with a gold watch, no doubt, at the end of it.

Living in the Rue de la Cerisaie since 1815, taken to and from school on his holidays by his stepfather Clapart, Oscar had never had any standard of comparison but his mother's poverty-stricken household. Kept very strictly, by Moreau's advice, he rarely went to the play, and then aspired no higher than to the Ambigu-Comique, where little elegance met his gaze, even if the absorbed attention a boy devotes to the stage had allowed him to study the house. His stepfather still wore his watch in a fob in the fashion of the Empire, with a heavy gold chain hanging over his stomach, and ending in a bunch of miscellaneous objects—seals, and a watch-key with a flat round top, in which was set a landscape in mosaic. Oscar, who looked on this out-of-date splendor as the *ne plus ultra* of luxury, was quite bewildered by this revelation of superior and less ponderous elegance. The young man also made an insolent display of a pair of good gloves, and seemed bent on blinding Oscar by his graceful handling of a smart cane with a gold knob.

Oscar had just reached the final stage of boyhood in which trifles are the cause of great joys and great anguish, when a real misfortune seems preferable to a ridiculous costume; and vanity, having no great interests in life to absorb it, centres in frivolities, and dress, and the anxiety to be thought a man. The youth magnifies himself, and his self-assertion is all the more marked because it turns on trifles; still, though he envies a well-dressed noodle, he can be also fired with enthu-

siasm for talent, and admire a man of genius. His faults, when they are not rooted in his heart, only show the exuberance of vitality and a lavish imagination. When a boy of nineteen, an only son, austerely brought up at home as a result of the poverty that weighs so cruelly on a clerk with twelve hundred francs' salary, but worshiped by a mother, who for his sake endures the bitterest privations—when such a boy is dazzled by a youth of two-and-twenty, envies him his frogged coat lined with silk, his sham cashmere vest, and a tie slipped through a vulgar ring, is not this a mere peccadillo such as may be seen in every class of life in the inferior who envies his betters?

Even a man of genius yields to this primitive passion. Did not Rousseau of Geneva envy Venture and Bacle?

But Oscar went on from the peccadillo to the real fault; he felt humiliated; he owed his traveling companion a grudge; and a secret desire surged up in his heart to show him that he was as good a man as he.

The two young bucks walked to and fro, from the gateway to the stables and back, going out to the street; and, as they turned on their heel, they each time looked at Oscar ensconced in his corner. Oscar, convinced that whenever they laughed it was at him, affected profound indifference. He began to hum the tune of a song then in fashion among the Liberals, "*C'est la faute à Voltaire, c'est la faute à Rousseau.*" (It is all the fault of Voltaire and Rousseau.) This assumption, no doubt, made them take him for some underling lawyer's clerk.

"Why, perhaps he sings in the chorus at the opera!" said Amaury.

Exasperated this time, Oscar bounded in his seat; raising the back curtain, he said to Pierrotin—

"When are we to be off?"

"Directly," said the man, who had his whip in his hand, but his eyes fixed on the Rue d'Enghien.

The scene was now enlivened by the arrival of a young man escorted by a perfect pickle of a boy, who appeared with a porter at their heels hauling a barrow by a strap. The young man spoke confidentially to Pierrotin, who wagged his head and hailed his stableman. The man hurried up to help unload the barrow, which contained, beside two trunks, pails, brushes, and boxes of strange shape, a mass of packets and utensils, which the younger of the two new-comers who had climbed to the box-seat stowed and packed away with such expedition that Oscar, smiling at his mother, who was now watching him from the other side of the street, failed to see any of the paraphernalia which might have explained to him in what profession his traveling companions were employed. The boy, about sixteen years of age, wore a holland blouse with a patent-leather belt; his cap, knowingly stuck on one side, proclaimed him a merry youth, as did the picturesque disorder of his curly brown hair tumbling about his shoulders. A black silk tie marked a black line on a very white neck, and seemed to heighten the brightness of his gray eyes. The restless vivacity of a sunburnt, rosy face, the shape of his full lips, his prominent ears, and his turn-up nose—every feature of his face showed the bantering wit of a Figaro and the recklessness of youth, while the quickness of his gestures and saucy glances revealed a keen intelligence, early developed by the practice of a profession taken up in boyhood. This boy, whom art or nature had already made a man, seemed indifferent to the question of dress, as though he were conscious of some intrinsic moral worth; for he looked at his unpolished boots as if he thought them rather a joke, and at his plain drill trousers to note the stains on them, but rather to study the effect than to hide them.

"I have acquired a fine tone!" said he, giving himself a shake, and addressing his companion.

The expression of the senior showed some authority over this youngster, in whom experienced eyes would at once have

discerned the jolly art student, known in French studio slang as a *rapin.*

"Behave, Mistigris!"* replied the master, calling him no doubt by a nickname bestowed on him in the studio.

The elder traveler was a slight and pallid young fellow, with immensely thick black hair in quite fantastic disorder; but this abundant hair seemed naturally necessary to a very large head with a powerful forehead that spoke of precocious intelligence. His curiously puckered face, too peculiar to be called ugly, was as hollow as though this singular young man were suffering either from some chronic malady or from the privations of extreme poverty—which is indeed a terrible chronic malady—or from sorrows too recent to have been forgotten.

His clothes, almost in keeping with those of Mistigris in proportion to his age and dignity, consisted of a much-worn coat of a dull green color, shabby, but quite clean and well brushed, a black vest buttoned to the neck, as the coat was too, only just showing a red handkerchief round his throat. Black trousers, as shabby as the coat, hung loosely round his lean legs. His boots were muddy, showing that he had come far, and on foot. With one swift glance the artist took in the depths of the hostelry of the Silver Lion, the stables, the tones of color, and every detail, and he looked at Mistigris, who had imitated him, with an ironical twinkle.

"Rather nice!" said Mistigris.

"Yes, very nice," replied the other.

"We are still too early," said Mistigris. "Couldn't we snatch a toothful? My stomach, like all nature, abhors a vacuum!"

"Have we time to get a cup of coffee?" said the artist, in a pleasant voice, to Pierrotin.

"Well, don't be long," said Pierrotin.

"We have a quarter of an hour," added Mistigris, thus re-

* The ace of clubs in the game of mouche.

vealing the genius for inference, which is characteristic of the Paris art student.

The couple disappeared. Just then nine o'clock struck in the inn kitchen. Georges thought it only fair and reasonable to appeal to Pierrotin.

"I say, my good friend, when you are the proud possessor of such a shandrydan as this," and he rapped the wheel with his cane, "you should at least make a merit of punctuality. The deuce is in it! we do not ride in that machine for our pleasure, and business must be devilish pressing before we trust our precious selves in it! And that old hack you call Rougeot will certainly not pick up lost time!"

"We will harness on Bichette while those two gentlemen are drinking their coffee," replied Pierrotin. "Go on, you," he added to the stableman, "and see if old Léger means to come with us——"

"Where is your old Léger?" asked Georges.

"Just opposite at Number 50; he couldn't find room in the Beaumont coach," said Pierrotin to his man, paying no heed to Georges, and going off himself in search of Bichette.

Georges shook hands with his friend and got into the chaise, after tossing in a large portfolio, with an air of much importance; this he placed under the cushion. He took the opposite corner to Oscar.

"This 'old Léger' bothers me," said he.

"They cannot deprive us of our places," said Oscar. "Mine is No. 1."

"And mine No. 2," replied Georges.

Just as Pierrotin reappeared, leading Bichette, the stableman returned, having in tow a huge man weighing about two hundred and forty pounds, apparently.

Old Léger was of the class of farmer who, with an enormous stomach and broad shoulders, wears a powdered queue and a light coat of blue linen. His white gaiters were tightly strapped above the knee over corduroy breeches, and finished

off with silver buckles. His hobnailed shoes weighed each a couple of pounds. In his hand he carried a little, knotted red cane, very shiny, and with a heavy knob, secured round his wrist by a leather thong.

"And is it you who are known as old Léger?"* said Georges gravely as the farmer tried to lift his foot to the step of the chaise.

"At your service," said the farmer, showing him a face rather like that of Louis XVIII., with a fat, red jowl, while above it rose a nose which in any other face would have seemed enormous. His twinkling eyes were deep set in rolls of fat.

"Come, lend a hand, my boy," said he to Pierrotin.

The farmer was hoisted in by the driver and the stableman to a shout of "Yo, heave ho!" from Georges.

"Oh! I am not going far; I am only going to la Cave!" said Farmer *Light*, answering a jest with good humor. In France everybody understands a joke.

"Get into the corner," said Pierrotin. "There will be six of you."

"And your other horse?" asked Georges. "Is it as fabulous as the third horse of a post-chaise?"

"There it is, master," said Pierrotin, pointing to the little mare that had come up without calling.

"He calls that insect a horse!" said Georges, astonished.

"Oh, she is a good one to go, is that little mare," said the farmer, who had taken his seat. "Morning, gentlemen. Are we going to weigh anchor, Pierrotin?"

"Two of my travelers are getting a cup of coffee," said the driver.

The young man with the hollow cheeks and his follower now reappeared.

"Come, let us get off," was now the universal cry.

"We are off—we are off!" replied Pierrotin. "Let her

* *Léger*—light.

go," he added to his man, who kicked away the stones that scotched the wheels.

Pierrotin took hold of Rougeot's bridle with an encouraging "*Tclk, tclk,*" to warn the two steeds to pull themselves together; and, torpid as they evidently were, they started the vehicle, which Pierrotin brought to a standstill in front of the gate of the Silver Lion. After this purely preliminary manœuvre, he again looked down the Rue d'Enghien, and vanished, leaving the conveyance in the care of the stableman.

"Well! Is your governor subject to these attacks?" Mistigris asked of the man.

"He is gone to fetch his oats away from the stable," replied the Auvergnat, who was up to all the arts in use to pacify the impatience of travelers.

"After all," said Mistigris, "*time is a great plaster.*"

At that time there was in the Paris studios a mania for distorting proverbs. It was considered a triumph to hit on some change of letters or some rhyming word which should suggest an absurd meaning, or even make it absolute nonsense.*

"And Paris was not gilt in a play," replied his comrade.

Pierrotin now returned, accompanied by the Comte de Sérizy, round the corner of the Rue de l'Echiquier; they had no doubt had a short conversation.

"Père Léger, would you mind giving your place up to Monsieur le Comte? It will trim the chaise better."

"And we shall not be off for an hour yet if you go on like this," said Georges. "You will have to take out that infernal bar we have had such plaguey trouble to fit in, and everybody will have to get out for the last comer. Each of us has a right to the place he booked. What number is this gentleman's? Come, call them over. Have you a way-bill? Do you keep a book? Which is Monsieur le Comte's place? Count of what?"

* To translate these not always funny jests is impossible. I have generally tried for no more than an equivalent rendering.—TRANSLATOR.

"Monsieur le Comte," said Pierrotin, visibly disturbed, "you will not be comfortable."

"Can't you count, man?" said Mistigris. "Short counts make tall friends."

"Mistigris, behave!" said his master quite seriously.

Monsieur de Sérizy was supposed by his fellow-travelers to be some respectable citizen called Lecomte.

"Do not disturb anybody," said the count to Pierrotin; "I will sit in front by you."

"Now, Mistigris," said the young artist, "remember the respect due to age. You don't know how dreadfully old you may live to be. *Manners take the van.* Give up your place to the gentleman."

Mistigris opened the apron of the chaise, and jumped out as nimbly as a frog into the water.

"You cannot sit as *rabbit*, august old man!" said he to Monsieur de Sérizy.

"Mistigris, *Tarts are the end of man*," said his master.

"Thank you, monsieur," said the count to the artist, by whose side he now took his seat. And the statesman looked with a sagacious eye at the possessors of the back seat, in a way that deeply aggrieved Oscar and Georges.

"We are an hour and a quarter behind time," remarked Oscar.

"People who want a chaise to themselves should book all the places," added Georges.

The Comte de Sérizy, quite sure now that he was not recognized, made no reply, but sat with the expression of a good-natured tradesman.

"And if you had been late, you would have liked us to wait for you, I suppose?" said the farmer to the two young fellows.

Pierrotin was looking out toward the Porte Saint-Denis, and paused for a moment before mounting to the hard box-seat, where Mistigris was kicking his heels.

"If you are still waiting for somebody, I am not the last," remarked the count.

"That is sound reasoning," said Mistigris.

Georges and Oscar laughed very rudely.

"The old gentleman is not strikingly original," said Georges to Oscar, who was enchanted with this apparent alliance.

When Pierrotin had settled himself in his place, he again looked back, but failed to discern in the crowd the two travelers who were wanting to fill up his cargo.

"By the mass, but a couple more passengers would not come amiss," said he.

"Look here, I have not paid; I shall get right out," said Georges in alarm.

"Why, whom do you expect, Pierrotin?" said Léger.

Pierrotin cried "Gee!" in a particular tone, which Rougeot and Bichette knew to mean business at last, and they trotted off toward the hill at a brisk pace, which, however, soon grew slack.

The count had a very red face, quite scarlet indeed, with an inflamed spot here and there, and set off all the more by his perfectly white hair. By any but quite young men this complexion would have been understood as the inflammatory effect on the blood of incessant work. And, indeed, these angry pimples so much disfigured his really noble face that only close inspection could discern in his greenish eyes all the acumen of the judge, the subtlety of the statesman, and the learning of the legislator. His face was somewhat flat; the nose especially looked as if it had been flattened. His hat hid the breadth and beauty of his brow; and, in fact, there was some justification for the laughter of these heedless lads, in the strange contrast between hair as white as silver and thick, bushy eyebrows still quite black. The count, who wore a long, blue overcoat, buttoned to the chin in military

fashion, had a white handkerchief round his neck, cotton-wool in his ears, and a high shirt-collar, showing a square white corner on each cheek. His black trousers covered his boots, of which the tip scarcely showed; he had no ribbon at his buttonhole, and his hands were hidden by his doeskin gloves. Certainly there was nothing in this man which could betray to the lads that he was a peer of France, and one of the most useful men living to his country.

Old Père Léger had never seen the count, who, on the other hand, knew him only by name. Though the count, as he got into the chaise, cast about him the inquiring glance which had so much annoyed Oscar and Georges, it was because he was looking for his notary's clerk, intending to impress on him the need for the greatest secrecy in case he should have been compelled to travel, like himself, by Pierrotin's conveyance. But he was reassured by Oscar's appearance and by that of the old farmer, and, above all, by the air of aping the military, with his mustache and his style generally, which stamped Georges an adventurer; and he concluded that his note had reached Maître Alexandre Crottat in good time.

"Père Léger," said Pierrotin as they came to the steep hill in the Faubourg Saint-Denis, at the Rue de la Fidélité, "suppose we were to walk a bit, heh?" On hearing the name, the count observed—

"I will get out too; we must ease the horses."

"Oh! If you go on at this rate, we shall do fourteen miles in fifteen days!" exclaimed Georges.

"Well, is it any fault of mine," said Pierrotin, "if a passenger wishes to get out?"

"I will give you ten louis if you keep my secret as I bid you," said the count, taking Pierrotin by the arm.

"Oh, ho! My thousand francs!" thought Pierrotin, after giving Monsieur de Sérizy a wink, conveying, "Trust me!"

Oscar and Georges remained in the chaise.

"Look here, Pierrotin—since Pierrotin you are," cried

Georges, when the travelers had gotten into the chaise again at the top of the hill, "if you are going no faster than this, say so. I will pay my fare to Saint-Denis, and hire a nag there, for I have important business on hand, which will suffer from delay."

"Oh! he will get on, never fear," replied the farmer. "And the road is not a long one."

"I am never more than half an hour late," answered Pierrotin.

"Well, well, you are not carting the pope, I suppose," said Georges, "so hurry up a little."

"You ought not to show any favor," said Mistigris; "and if you are afraid of jolting this gentleman"—and he indicated the count—"that is not fair."

"All men are equal in the eye of the *coucou*," said Georges, "as all Frenchmen are in the eye of the Charter."

"Be quite easy," said old Léger, "we shall be at la Chapelle yet before noon." La Chapelle is a village close to the Barrière Saint-Denis.

Those who have traveled know that persons thrown together in a public conveyance do not immediately amalgamate; unless under exceptional circumstances, they do not converse till they are well on their way. This silent interval is spent partly in reciprocal examination, and partly in finding each his own place and taking possession of it. The soul, as much as the body, needs to find its balance. When each, severally, supposes that he has made an accurate guess at his companion's age, profession, and temper, the most talkative first opens a conversation, which is taken up all the more eagerly because all feel the need for cheering the way and dispelling the dullness.

This, at least, is what happens in a French coach. In other countries manners are different. The English pride themselves on never opening their lips; a German is dull in a coach; Italians are too cautious to chat; the Spaniards have

almost ceased to have any coaches; and the Russians have no roads. So it is only in the ponderous French diligence that the passengers amuse each other, in the gay and gossiping nation where each one is eager to laugh and display his humor, where everything is enlivened by raillery, from the misery of the poorest to the solid interests of the upper middle-class. The police do little to check the license of speech, and the gallery of the Chambers has made discussion fashionable.

When a youngster of two-and-twenty, like the young gentleman who was known so far by the name of Georges, has a ready wit, he is strongly tempted, especially in such circumstances as these, to be reckless in the use of it. In the first place, Georges was not slow to come to the conclusion that he was the superior man of the party. He decided that the count was a manufacturer of the second class, setting him down as a cutler; the shabby-looking youth attended by Mistigris he thought but a greenhorn, Oscar a perfect simpleton, and the farmer a capital butt for a practical joke. Having thus taken the measure of all his traveling companions, he determined to amuse himself at their expense.

"Now," thought he, as the *coucou* rolled down the hill from la Chapelle toward the plain of Saint-Denis, "shall I pass myself off as Étienne or as Béranger? No, these bumpkins have never heard of either. A Carbonaro? The devil! I might be nabbed. One of Marshal Ney's sons? Pooh, what could I make of that? Tell them the story of my father's death? That would hardly be funny. Suppose I were to have come back from the Government colony in America? They might take me for a spy, and regard me with suspicion. I will be a Russian prince in disguise; I will cram them with fine stories about the Emperor Alexander! Or if I pretended to be Cousin, the Professor of Philosophy? How I could mystify them! No, that limp creature with the towzled hair looks as if he might have kicked his heels at lecture at the Sorbonne. Oh, why didn't I think sooner of trotting them

out? I can imitate an Englishman so well, I might have been Lord Byron traveling *incog.* Hang it! I have missed my chance. The executioner's son? Not a bad way of clearing a space at breakfast. Oh! I know! I will have been in command of the troops under Ali, the Pasha of Janina."

While he was lost in these meditations, the chaise was making its way through the clouds of dust which constantly blow up from the side-paths of this much-trodden road.

"What a dust!" said Mistigris.

"King Henri is dead," retorted his comrade. "If you said it smelt of vanilla now, you would hit on a new idea!"

"You think that funny," said Mistigris. "Well, but it does now and then remind me of vanilla."

"In the East——" Georges began, meaning to concoct a story.

"In the least——" said Mistigris' master, taking up Georges.

"In the East, I said, from whence I have just returned," Georges repeated, "the dust smells very sweet. But here it smells of nothing unless it is wafted up from such a manure-heap as this."

"You have just returned from the East?" said Mistigris, with a sly twinkle.

"And, you see, Mistigwis, the gentleman is so tired that what he now wequires is west," drawled his master.

"You are not much sunburnt," said Mistigris.

"Oh! I am but just out of bed after three months' illness, caused, the learned doctors say, by an attack of suppressed plague."

"You have had the plague?" cried the count, with a look of horror. "Pierrotin, put me out."

"Get on, Pierrotin," said Mistigris. "You hear that the plague was suppressed," he went on, addressing Monsieur de Sérizy. "It was the sort of plague that only comes out in the course of conversation."

"The plague of which one merely says, 'Plague take it!'" cried the artist.

"Or plague take the man!" added Mistigris.

"Mistigris," said his master, "I shall put you out to walk if you get into mischief. So you have been in the East, monsieur?" he went on, turning to Georges.

"Yes, monsieur. First in Egypt and then in Greece, where I served under Ali Pasha of Janina, with whom I had a desperate row. The climate is too much for most men; and the excitements of all kinds that are part of an Oriental life wrecked my liver."

"Oh, ho, a soldier?" said the burly farmer. "Why, how old are you?"

"I am nine-and-twenty," said Georges, and all his fellow-travelers looked at him. "At eighteen I served as a private in the famous campaign of 1813; but I only was present at the battle of Hanau, where I won the rank of sergeant-major. In France, at Montereau, I was made sub-lieutenant, and I was decorated by—no spies here?—by the Emperor."

"And you do not wear the cross of your order?" said Oscar.

"A cross given by the present set?* Thank you for nothing. Beside, who that is anybody wears his decorations when traveling? Look at monsieur," he went on, indicating the Comte de Sérizy, "I will bet you anything you please——"

"Betting anything you please is the same thing in France as not betting at all," said Mistigris' master.

"I will bet you anything you please," Georges repeated pompously, "that he is covered with stars."

"I have, in fact," said Monsieur de Sérizy, with a laugh, "the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor, the Grand Cross of Saint-Andrew of Russia, of the Eagle of Prussia, of the Order of the Annunciada of Sardinia, and of the Golden Fleece."

* *Ceux-ci.*

"Is that all?" said Mistigris. "And it all rides in a public chaise?"

"He is going it, is the brick-red man?" said Georges in a whisper to Oscar. "What did I tell you?" he remarked aloud. "I make no secret of it, I am devoted to the Emperor!"

"I served under him," said the count.

"And what a man! Wasn't he?" cried Georges.

"A man to whom I am under great obligations," replied the count, with a well-affected air of stupidity.

"For your crosses?" asked Mistigris.

"And what quantities of snuff he took!" replied Monsieur de Sérizy.

"Yes, he carried it loose in his waistcoat pockets."

"So I have been told," said the farmer, with a look of incredulity.

"And not only that, but he chewed and smoked," Georges went on. "I saw him smoking in the oddest way at Waterloo when Marshal Soult lifted him up bodily and flung him into his traveling carriage, just as he had seized a musket and wanted to charge the English!"

"So you were at Waterloo?" said Oscar, opening his eyes very wide.

"Yes, young man, I went through the campaign of 1815. At Mont Saint-Jean I was made captain, and I retired on the Loire when we were disbanded. But, on my honor, I was sick of France, and I could not stay. No, I should have got myself into some scrape. So I went off with two or three others of the same sort, Selves, Besson, and some more, who are in Egypt to this day in the service of Mohammed Pasha, and a queer fellow he is, I can tell you! He was a tobacconist at la Cavalle, and is now on the way to be a reigning prince. You have seen him in Horace Vernet's picture of the 'Massacre of the Mamelukes.' Such a handsome man! I never would abjure the faith of my fathers and adopt Islam;

all the more because the ceremony involves a surgical operation for which I had no liking. Beside, no one respects a renegade. If they had offered me a hundred thousand francs a year, then, indeed—and yet—no. The pasha made me a present of a thousand *talari*."

"How much is that?" asked Oscar, who was all ears.

"Oh, no great matter. The talaro is much the same as a five-franc piece. And, on my honor, I did not earn enough to pay for the vices I learned in that thundering vile country—if you can call it a country. I cannot live now without smoking my narghileh twice a day, and it is very expensive and——"

"And what is Egypt like?" asked Monsieur de Sérizy.

"Egypt is all sand," replied Georges, quite undaunted. "There is nothing green but the Nile valley. Draw a green strip on a sheet of yellow paper, and there you have Egypt. The Egyptians, the fellaheen, have, I may remark, one great advantage over us; there are no gendarmes. You may go from one end of Egypt to the other, and you will not find one."

"But I suppose there are a good many Egyptians," said Mistigris.

"Not so many as you would think," answered Georges. "There are more Abyssinians, Giaours, Vechabites, Bedouins, and Copts. However, all these creatures are so very far from amusing that I was only too glad to embark on a Genoese polacra, bound for the Ionian Islands to take up powder and ammunition for Ali of Tebelen. As you know, the English sell powder and ammunition to all nations, to the Turks and the Greeks; they would sell them to the devil if the devil had money. So from Zante we were to luff up to the coast of Greece.

"And, I tell you, take me as you see me, the name of Georges is famous in those parts. I am the grandson of that famous Czerni-Georges who made war on the Porte; but in-

stead of breaking it down, he was unluckily smashed up. His son took refuge in the house of the French Consul at Smyrna, and came to Paris in 1792, where he died before I, his seventh child, was born. Our treasure was stolen from us by a friend of my grandfather's, so we were ruined. My mother lived by selling her diamonds one by one, till in 1799 she married Monsieur Yung, a contractor, and my stepfather. But my mother died; I quarreled with my stepfather, who, between ourselves, is a rascal; he is still living, but we never meet. The wretch left us all seven to our fate without a word, or bit or sup. And that is how, in 1813, in sheer despair, I went off as a conscript. You cannot imagine with what joy Ali of Tebelen hailed the grandson of Czerni-Georges. Here I call myself simply Georges. The pasha gave me a seraglio for——"

"You had a seraglio?" said Oscar.

"Were you a pasha with many tails?" asked Mistigris.

"How is it that you don't know that there is but one sultan who can create pashas?" said Georges, "and my friend Tebelen—for we were friends, like two Bourbons—was a rebel against the padischah. You know—or you don't know—that the grand seignior's correct title is padischah, and not the grand turk or the sultan.

"Do not suppose that a seraglio is any great matter. You might just as well have a flock of goats. Their women are great fools, and I like the grisettes of the *Chaumière* (cottages) at Mont-Parnasse a thousand times better."

"And they are much nearer," said the Comte de Sérizy.

"These women of the seraglio never know a word of French, and language is indispensable to an understanding. Ali gave me five lawful wives and ten slave girls. At Janina that was a mere nothing. In the East, you see, it is very bad style to have wives; you have them, but as we here have our Voltaire and our Rousseau; who ever looks into his Voltaire or his Rousseau? Nobody. And yet it is quite the right

thing to be jealous. You may tie a woman up in a sack and throw her into the water on a mere suspicion by an article of their Code."

"Did you throw any in?"

"I? What! a Frenchman! I was devoted to them."

Whereupon Georges twirled up his mustache, and assumed a pensive air.

By this time they were at Saint-Denis, and Pierrotin drew up at the door of the inn where the famous cheese-cakes are sold, and where all travelers call. The count, really puzzled by the mixture of truth and nonsense in Georges' rhodomontade, jumped into the carriage again, looked under the cushion for the portfolio which Pierrotin had told him that this mysterious youth had bestowed there, and saw on it in gilt letters the words, "Maître Crottat, Notaire." The count at once took the liberty of opening the case, fearing, with good reason, that if he did not, Farmer Léger might be possessed with similar curosity; and taking out the deed relating to the Moulineaux farm, he folded it up, put it in the side-pocket of his coat, and came back to join his fellow-travelers.

"This Georges is neither more nor less than Crottat's junior clerk. I will congratulate his master, who ought to have sent his head-clerk."

From the respectful attention of the farmer and Oscar, Georges perceived that in them at least he had two ardent admirers. Of course, he put on lordly airs; he treated them to cheese-cakes and a glass of Alicante, and offered the same to Mistigris and his master, which they refused, asking them their names on the strength of this munificence.

"Oh, monsieur," said the elder, "I am not the proud owner of so illustrious a name as yours, and I have not come home from Asia." The count, who had made haste to get back to the vast inn kitchen, so as to excite no suspicions, came in time to hear the end of the reply. "I am simply a poor painter just returned from Rome, where I went at the

expense of the Government after winning the Grand Prize five years ago. My name is Schinner."

"Halloo, master, may I offer you a glass of Alicante and some cheese-cakes?" cried Georges to the count.

"Thank you, no," said the count. "I never come out till I have had my cup of coffee and cream."

"And you never eat anything between meals? How *Marais, Place Royale, Ile Saint-Louis!*" exclaimed Georges. "When he crammed us just now about his orders, I fancied him better fun than he is," he went on in a low voice to the painter; "but we will get him on to that subject again—the little tallow-chandler. Come, boy," said he to Oscar, "drink the glass that was poured out for the grocer, it will make your mustache grow."

Oscar, anxious to play the man, drank the second glass of wine, and ate three more cheese-cakes.

"Very good wine it is!" said old Léger, smacking his tongue.

"And all the better," remarked Georges, "because it comes from Bercy. I have been to Alicante, and, I tell you, this is no more like the wine of that country than my arm is like a windmill. Our manufactured wines are far better than the natural products. Come, Pierrotin, have a glass. What a pity it is that your horses cannot each drink one; we should get on faster!"

"Oh, that is unnecessary, as I have a gray horse already," said Pierrotin (*gris*, which means gray, meaning also *screwed*).

Oscar, as he heard the vulgar pun, thought Pierrotin a marvel of wit.

"Off!" cried Pierrotin, cracking his whip, as soon as the passengers had once more packed themselves into the vehicle.

It was by this time eleven o'clock. The weather, which had been rather dull, now cleared; the wind swept away the clouds; the blue sky shone out here and there; and by the

time Pierrotin's chaise was fairly started on the ribbon of road between Saint-Denis and Pierrefitte, the sun had finally drunk up the last filmy haze that hung like a diaphanous veil over the views from this famous suburb.

"Well, and why did you throw over your friend the pasha?" said the farmer to Georges.

"He was a very queer customer," replied Georges, with an air of hiding many mysteries. "Only think, he put me in command of his cavalry! Very well——"

"That," thought poor Oscar, "is why he wears spurs."

"At that time, Ali of Tebelen wanted to rid himself of Chosrew Pasha, another queer fish. Chaureff you call him here, but in Turkey they call him Cosserev. You must have read in the papers at the time that old Ali had beaten Chosrew and pretty soundly, too. Well, but for me, Ali would have been done for some days sooner. I led the right wing, and I saw Chosrew, the old sneak, just charging the centre—oh, yes, I can tell you, as straight and steady a move as if he had been Murat. Good! I took my time, and I charged at full speed, cutting Chosrew's column in two parts, for he had pushed through our centre, and had no cover. You understand——

"After it was all over Ali fairly kissed me."

"Is that the custom in the East?" said the Comte de Sérizy, with a touch of irony.

"Yes, monsieur, as it is everywhere," answered the painter.

"We drove Chosrew back over thirty leagues of country—like a hunt, I tell you," Georges went on. "Splendid horsemen are the Turks. Ali gave me yataghans, guns, and swords: 'Take as many as you like.' When we got back to the capital, that incredible creature made proposals to me that did not suit my views at all. He wanted to adopt me as his favorite, his heir. But I had had enough of the life; for, after all, Ali of Tebelen was a rebel against the Porte, and I thought it wiser to clear out. But I must do Monsieur de

Tebelen justice, he loaded me with presents; diamonds, ten thousand talari, a thousand pieces of gold, a fair Greek girl for a page, a little Arnaute maid for company, and an Arab horse. Well, there! Ali, the Pasha of Janina, is an unappreciated man; he lacks a historian. Nowhere but in the East do you meet with these iron souls who, for twenty years, strain every nerve, only to be able to take a revenge one fine morning.

"In the first place, he had the grandest white beard you ever saw, and a hard, stern face—"

"But what became of your treasure?" asked the farmer.

"Ah! there you are! Those people have no State funds nor Bank of France; so I packed my money-bags on board a Greek tartane, which was captured by the capitan-pasha himself. Then I myself, as you see me, was within an ace of being impaled at Smyrna. Yes, on my honor, but for Monsieur de Rivière, the ambassador, who happened to be on the spot, I should have been executed as an ally of Ali Pasha's. I saved my head, or I could not speak so plainly; but as for the ten thousand talari, the thousand pieces of gold, and the weapons, oh! that was all swallowed down by that greedy-guts the capitan-pasha. My position was all the more ticklish because the capitan-pasha was Chosrew himself. After the dressing he had had, the scamp had got this post, which is equal to that of high admiral in France."

"But he had been in the cavalry, as I understood?" said old Léger, who had been listening attentively to this long story.

"Dear me, how little the East is understood in the Department of Seine et Oise!" exclaimed Georges. "Monsieur, the Turks are like that. You are a farmer, the padischah makes you a field-marshal; if you do not fulfill your duties to his satisfaction, so much the worse for you. Off with your head! That is his way of dismissing you. A gardener is made prefect, and a prime minister is a private

once more. The Ottomans know no laws of promotion or hierarchy. Chosrew, who had been a horseman, was now a sailor. The Padischah Mohammed had instructed him to fall on Ali by sea; and he had, in fact, mastered him, but only by the help of the English, who got the best of the booty, the thieves! They laid hands on the treasure.

"This Chosrew, who had not forgotten the riding-lesson I had given him, recognized me at once. As you may suppose, I was settled—oh! done for!—if it had not occurred to me to appeal, as a Frenchman and a troubadour, to Monsieur de Rivière. The ambassador, delighted to assert himself, demanded my release. The Turks have this great merit, they are as ready to let you go as to cut off your head; they are indifferent to everything. The French consul, a charming man, and a friend of Chosrew's, got him to restore two thousand talari, and his name, I may say, is graven on my heart——"

"And his name——?" asked Monsieur de Sérizy.

He could not forbear a look of surprise when Georges, in fact, mentioned the name of one of our most distinguished consuls-general, who was at Smyrna at the time.

"I was present, as it fell out, at the execution of the Commandant of Smyrna, the padischah having ordered Chosrew to put him to death—one of the most curious things I ever saw, though I have seen many. I will tell you all about it by-and-by at breakfast.

"From Smyrna I went to Spain, on hearing there was a revolution there. I went straight to Mina, who took me for an aide-de-camp, and gave me the rank of colonel. So I fought for the Constitutional party, which is going to the dogs, for we shall walk into Spain one of these days."

"And you a French officer!" said the Comte de Sérizy severely. "You are trusting very rashly to the discretion of your hearers."

"There are no spies among them," said Georges.

"And does it not occur to you, Colonel Georges," said the count, "that at this very time a conspiracy is being inquired into by the Chamber of Peers, which makes the Government very strict in its dealings with soldiers who bear arms against France, or who aid in intrigues abroad tending to the overthrow of any legitimate sovereign?"

At this ominous remark, the painter reddened up to his ears, and glanced at Mistigris, who was speechless.

"Well, and what then?" asked old Léger.

"Why, if I by chance were a magistrate, would it not be my duty to call on the gendarmes of the Brigade at Pierrefitte to arrest Mina's aide-de-camp," said the count, "and to summons all who are in this chaise as witnesses?"

This speech silenced Georges all the more effectually because the vehicle was just passing the Police Station, where the white flag was, to use a classical phrase, floating on the breeze.

"You have too many orders to be guilty of such mean conduct," said Oscar.

"We will play him a trick yet," whispered Georges to Oscar.

"Colonel," said Léger, very much discomfited by the count's outburst, and anxious to change the subject, "in the countries where you have traveled, what is the farming like? What are their crops in rotation?"

"In the first place, my good friend, you must understand that the people are too busy smoking weeds to burn them on the land——"

The count could not help smiling, and his smile reassured the narrator.

"And they have a way of cultivating the land which you will think strange. They do not cultivate it at all; that is their system. The Turks and Greeks eat onions or rice; they collect opium from their poppies, which yields a large revenue, and tobacco grows almost wild—their famous Latakia. Then there are dates, bunches of sugar-plums, that grow without any

trouble. It is a country of endless resources and trade. Quantities of carpets are made at Smyrna, and not dear."

"Ay," said the farmer, "but if the carpets are made of wool, wool comes from sheep; and to have sheep, they must have fields, farms, and farming——"

"There must, no doubt, be something of the kind," replied Georges. "But rice, in the first place, grows in water; and then I have always been near the coast, and have only seen the country devastated by war. Beside, I have a perfect horror of statistics."

"And the taxes?" said the farmer.

"Ah! the taxes are heavy. The people are robbed of everything, and allowed to keep the rest. The Pasha of Egypt, struck by the merits of this system, was organizing the administration on that basis when I left."

"But how?" said old Léger, who was utterly puzzled.

"How?" echoed Georges. "There are collectors who seize the crops, leaving the peasants just enough to live on. And by that system there is no trouble with papers and red tape, the plague of France. There you are!"

"But what right have they to do it?" asked the farmer.

"It is the land of despotism, that's all. Did you never hear Montesquieu's fine definition of Despotism—'Like the savage, it cuts the tree down to gather the fruit.'"

"And that is what they want to bring us to!" cried Mistigris. "But a burnt rat dreads the mire."

"And it is what we shall come to," exclaimed the Comte de Sérizy. "Those who hold land will be wise to sell it. Monsieur Schinner must have seen how such things are done in Italy."

"*Corpo di Bacco!* The pope is not behind his times. But they are used to it there. The Italians are such good people! So long as they are allowed to do a little highway murdering of travelers, they are quite content."

"But you, too, do not wear the ribbon of the Legion of

Honor that was given you in 1819," remarked the count. "Is the fashion universal?"

Mistigris and the false Schinner reddened up to their very hair.

"Oh, with me it is different," replied Schinner. "I do not wish to be recognized. Do not betray me, monsieur. I mean to pass for a quite unimportant painter; in fact, a mere decorator. I am going to a gentleman's house where I am anxious to excite no suspicion."

"Oh, ho!" said the count, "a lady! a love affair! How happy you are to be young!"

Oscar, who was bursting in his skin with envy at being nobody and having nothing to say, looked from Colonel Czerni-Georges to Schinner the great artist, wondering whether he could not make something of himself. But what could he be, a boy of nineteen, packed off to spend a fortnight or three weeks in the country with the steward of Presles? The Alicante had gone to his head, and his conceit was making the blood boil in his veins. Thus, when the sham Schinner seemed to hint at some romantic adventure of which the joys must be equal to the danger, he gazed at him with eyes flashing with rage and envy.

"Ah!" said the count, with a look half of envy and half of incredulity, "you must love a woman very much to make such sacrifices for her sake."

"What sacrifices?" asked Mistigris.

"Don't you know, my little friend, that a ceiling painted by so great a master is covered with gold in payment?" replied the count. "Why, if the Civil List pays you thirty thousand francs for those of the two rooms in the Louvre," he went on, turning to Schinner, "you would certainly charge a humble individual, a bourgeois, as you call us in your studios, twenty thousand for a ceiling, while an unknown decorator would hardly get two thousand francs."

"The money loss is not the worst of it," replied Mistigris.

"You must consider that it will be a masterpiece, and that he must not sign it for fear of compromising *her*."

"Ah! I would gladly restore all my orders to the sovereigns of Europe to be loved as a young man must be, to be moved to such devotion!" cried Monsieur de Sérizy.

"Ay, there you are," said Mistigris. "A man who is young is beloved of many women; and as the saying goes, there is safety in grumblers."

"And what does Madame Schinner say to it?" asked the count, "for you married for love the charming Adélaïde de Rouville,* the niece of old Admiral Kergarouët, who got you the work at the Louvre, I believe, through the interest of his nephew the Comte de Fontaine."

"Is a painter ever a married man when he is traveling?" asked Mistigris.

"That, then, is Studio morality?" exclaimed the count in an idiomatic way.

"Is the morality of the courts where you got your orders any better?" said Schinner, who had recovered his presence of mind, which had deserted him for a moment when he heard that the count was so well informed as to the commission given to the real Schinner.

"I never asked for one," replied the count. "I flatter myself that they were all honestly earned."

"And it becomes you like a pig in dress-boots," said Mistigris.

Monsieur de Sérizy would not betray himself; he put on an air of stupid good-nature as he looked out over the valley of Groslay, into which they diverged where the roads fork, taking the road to Saint-Brice, and leaving that to Chantilly on their right.

"Ay, take that!" said Oscar between his teeth.

"And is Rome as fine as it is said to be?" Georges asked of the painter.

See "The Purse."

"Rome is fine only to those who love it; you must have a passion for it to be happy there; but, as a town, I prefer Venice, though I was near being assassinated there."

"My word! But for me," said Mistigris, "your goose would have been cooked! It was that rascal Lord Byron who played you that trick. That devil of an Englishman was as mad as a hatter!"

"Hold your tongue," said Schinner. "I won't have anything known of my affair with Lord Byron."

"But you must confess," said Mistigris, "that you were very glad, indeed, that I had learned to 'box' in our French fashion?"

Now and again Pierrotin and the count exchanged significant glances, which would have disturbed men a little more worldly-wise than these five fellow-travelers.

"Lords and pashas, and ceilings worth thirty thousand francs! Bless me!" cried the l'Isle-Adam carrier, "I have crowned heads on board to-day. What handsome tips I shall get!"

"To say nothing of the places being paid for," said Mistigris slily.

"It comes in the nick of time," Pierrotin went on. "For, you know, my fine new coach, Père Léger, for which I paid two thousand francs on account—well, those swindling coach-builders, to whom I am to pay two thousand five hundred francs to-morrow, would not take fifteen hundred francs down and a bill for a thousand at two months. The vultures insist on it all in ready money. Fancy being as hard as that on a man who has traveled this road for eight years, the father of a family, and putting him in danger of losing everything, money and coach both, for lack of a wretched sum of a thousand francs! Gee up, Bichette. They would not dare to do it to one of the big companies, I lay a wager."

"Bless me! No thong, no crupper!" said the student.

"You have only eight hundred francs to seek," replied the

count, understanding that this speech, addressed to the farmer, was a sort of bill drawn on himself.

"That's true," said Pierrotin. "Come up, Rougeot; there, Bichette!"

"You must have seen some fine-painted ceilings at Venice," said the count, speaking to Schinner.

"I was too desperately in love to pay any attention to what at the time seemed to me mere trifles," replied Schinner. "And yet I might have been cured of love-affairs; for in the Venetian States themselves, in Dalmatia, I had just had a sharp lesson."

"Can you tell the tale?" asked Georges. "I know Dalmatia."

"Well, then, if you have been there, you know, of course, that up in that corner of the Adriatic they are all old pirates, outlaws, and corsairs retired from business, when they have escaped hanging, all——"

"Uscoques, in short," said Georges.

On hearing this, the right name, the count, whom Napoleon had sent into the province of Illyria, looked sharply round, so much was he astonished.

"It was in the town where the maraschino is made," said Schinner, seeming to try to remember a name.

"Zara," said Georges. "Yes, I have been there; it is on the coast."

"You have hit it," said the painter. "I went there to see the country, for I have a passion for landscape. Twenty times have I made up my mind to try landscape painting, which no one understands, in my opinion, but Mistigris, who will one of these days be a Hobbema, Ruysdael, Claude Lorraine, Poussin, and all the tribe in one."

"Well," exclaimed the count, "if he is but one of them, he will do."

"If you interrupt so often we shall never know where we are."

"Beside, our friend here is not speaking to you," added Georges to the count.

"It is not good manners to interrupt," said Mitigris sententiously. "However, we did the same; and we should all be the losers if we didn't diversify the conversation by an exchange of reflections. All Frenchmen are equal in a public chaise, as the grandson of Czerni-Georges told us. So pray go on, delightful old man, more of your bunkum. It is quite the correct thing in the best society; and you know the saying, Do in Turkey as the Turkeys do."

"I had heard wonders of Dalmatia," Schinner went on. "So off I went, leaving Mistigris at the inn at Venice."

"At the *locanda*," said Mistigris; "put in the local color."

"Zara is, as I have been told, a vile hole——"

"Yes," said Georges; "but it is fortified."

"I should say so!" replied Schinner, "and the fortifications are an important feature in my story. At Zara there are a great many apothecaries, and I lodged with one of them. In foreign countries the principal business of every native is to let lodgings, his trade is purely accessory.

"In the evening, when I had changed my shirt, I went out on my balcony. Now on the opposite balcony I perceived a woman—oh! But a woman! A Greek; that says everything, the loveliest creature in all the town. Almond eyes, eyelids that came down over them like blinds, and lashes like paint-brushes; an oval face that might have turned Raphael's brain, a complexion of exquisite hue, melting tones, a skin of velvet —hands—oh!"

"And not moulded in butter like those of David's school," said Mistigris.

"You insist on talking like a painter!" cried Georges.

"There, you see! drive nature out with a pitchfork and it comes back in a paint-box," replied Mistigris.

"And her costume—a genuine Greek costume," Schinner went on. "As you may suppose, I was in flames. I ques-

tioned my Diafoirus, and he informed me that my fair neighbor's name was Zéna. I changed my shirt. To marry Zéna, her husband, an old villain, had paid her parents three hundred thousand francs, the girl's beauty was so famous; and she really was the loveliest creature in all Dalmatia, Illyria, and the Adriatic. In that part of the world you buy your wife and without having seen her——"

"I will not go there," said old Léger.

"My sleep, some nights, is illuminated by Zéna's eyes," said Schinner. "Her adoring young husband was sixty-seven. Good! But he was as jealous—not as a tiger, for they say a tiger is as jealous as a Dalmatian, and my man was worse than a Dalmatian; he was equal to three Dalmatians and a half. He was an Uscoque, a turkey-cock, a high cockalorum game-cock!"

"In short, the worthy hero of a cock-and-bull story," said Mistigris.

"Good for you!" replied Georges, laughing.

"After being a corsair, and perhaps a pirate, my man thought no more of spitting a Christian than I do of spitting out of window," Schinner went on. "A pretty lookout for me. And rich—rolling in millions, the old villain! And as ugly as a pirate may be, for some pasha had wanted his ears, and he had dropped an eye somewhere on his travels. But my Uscoque made good use of the one he had, and you may take my word for it when I tell you he had eyes all round his head. 'Never does he let his wife out of his sight,' said my little Diafoirus. 'If she should require your services, I would take your place in disguise,' said I. 'It is a trick that is very successful in our stage-plays.' It would take too long to describe the most delightful period of my life, three days, to wit, that I spent at my window ogling Zéna, and putting on a clean shirt every morning. The situation was all the more ticklish and exciting because the least gesture bore some dangerous meaning. Finally, Zéna, no doubt, came to the

conclusion that in all the world none but a foreigner, a Frenchman, and an artist would be capable of making eyes at her in the midst of the perils that surrounded him; so, as she execrated her hideous pirate, she responded to my gaze with glances that were enough to lift a man into the vault of paradise without any need of pulleys. I was screwed up higher and higher! I was tuned to the pitch of Don Quixote. At last I exclaimed: 'Well, the old wretch may kill me, but here goes!' Not a landscape did I study; I was studying my corsair's lair. At night, having put on my most highly scented clean shirt, I crossed the street and I went in——"

"Into the house?" cried Oscar.

"Into the house?" said Georges.

"Into the house," repeated Schinner.

"Well! you are as bold as brass!" cried the farmer. "I wouldn't have gone, that's all I can say——"

"With all the more reason that you would have stuck in the door," replied Schinner. "Well, I went in," he continued, "and I felt two hands which took hold of mine. I said nothing; for those hands, as smooth as the skin of an onion, impressed silence on me. A whisper in my ear said in Venetian, 'He is asleep.' Then, being sure that no one would meet us, Zéna and I went out on the ramparts for an airing, but escorted, if you please, by an old duenna as ugly as sin, who stuck to us like a shadow; and I could not induce Madame la Pirate to dismiss this ridiculous attendant.

"Next evening we did the same; I wanted to send the old woman home; Zéna refused. As my fair one spoke Greek, and I spoke Venetian, we could come to no understanding—we parted in anger! Said I to myself, as I changed my shirt: 'Next time surely there will be no old woman, and we can make friends again, each in our mother tongue.' Well, and it was the old woman that saved me, as you shall hear. It was so fine that, to divert suspicion, I went out to look about me, after we had made it up, of course. After walking round

the ramparts, I was coming quietly home with my hands in my pockets when I saw the street packed full of people. Such a crowd! as if there was an execution. This crowd rushed at me. I was arrested, handcuffed, and led off in charge of the police. No, you cannot imagine, and I hope you may never know, what it is to be supposed to be a murderer by a frenzied mob, throwing stones at you, yelling after you from top to bottom of the high street of a country town, and pursuing you with threats of death! Every eye is a flame of fire, abuse is on every lip, these firebrands of loathing flare up above a hideous cry of 'Kill him! down with the murderer!' a sort of bass in the background."

"So your Dalmatians yelled in French?" said the count. "You describe the scene as if it had happened yesterday."

Schinner was for the moment dumfounded.

"The mob speaks the same language everywhere," said Mistigris the politician.

"Finally," Schinner went on again, "when I was in the local Court of Justice and in the presence of the judges of that country, I was informed that the diabolical corsair was dead, poisoned by Zéna. How I wished I could put on a clean shirt!

"On my soul, I knew nothing about this melodrama. It would seem that the fair Greek was wont to add a little opium —poppies are so plentiful there, as monsieur has told you—to her pirate's grog to secure a few minutes' liberty to take a walk, and the night before the poor woman had made a mistake in the dose. It was the damned corsair's money that made the trouble for my Zéna; but she accounted for everything so simply that I was released at once on the strength of the old woman's affidavit, with an order from the mayor of the town and the Austrian commissioner of police to remove myself to Rome. Zéna, who allowed the heirs and the officers of the law to help themselves liberally to the Uscoque's wealth, was let off, I was told, with two years' seclusion in a convent,

where she still is. I will go back and paint her portrait, for in a few years everything will be forgotten. And these are the follies of eighteen!"

"Yes, and you left me without a sou in the *locanda* at Venice," said Mistigris. "I made my way from Venice to Rome, to see if I could find you, by daubing portraits at five francs a head, and never got paid; but it was a jolly time! Happiness, they say, does not dwell under gilt hoofs."

"You may imagine the reflections that choked me with bile in a Dalmatian prison, thrown there without a protector, having to answer to the Dalmatian Austrians, and threatened with the loss of my head for having twice taken a walk with a woman who insisted on being followed by her housekeeper. That is what I call bad luck!" cried Schinner.

"What," said Oscar guilelessly, "did that happen to you?"

"Why not to this gentleman, since it had already happened during the French occupation of Illyria to one of our most distinguished artillery officers?" said the count with meaning.

"And did you believe the artillery man?" asked Mistigris slily.

"And is that all?" asked Oscar.

"Well," said Mistigris, "he cannot tell you that he had his head cut off. Those who live last live longest."

"And are there any farms out there?" asked old Léger. "What do they grow there?"

"There is the maraschino crop," said Mistigris. "A plant that grows just as high as your lips and yields the liqueur of that name."

"Ah!" said Léger.

"I was only three days in the town and a fortnight in prison," replied Schinner. "I saw nothing, not even the fields where they grow the maraschino."

"They are making game of you," said Georges to the farmer. "Maraschino grows in cases."

"Romances alter cases," remarked Mistigris.

Pierrotin's chaise was now on the way down one of the steep sides of the valley of Saint-Brice, toward the inn in the middle of that large village, where he was to wait an hour to let his horses take breath, eat their oats, and get a drink. It was now about half-past one.

"Halloo! It is Farmer Léger!" cried the innkeeper, as the vehicle drew up at his door. "Do you take breakfast?"

"Once every day," replied the burly customer. "We can eat a snack."

"Order breakfast for us," said Georges, carrying his cane as if he were shouldering a musket, in a cavalier style that bewitched Oscar.

Oscar felt a pang of frenzy when he saw this reckless adventurer take a fancy straw cigar-case out of his side-pocket, and from it a beautiful tan-colored cigar, which he smoked in the doorway while waiting for the meal.

"Do you smoke?" said Georges to Oscar.

"Sometimes," said the schoolboy, puffing out his little chest and assuming a dashing style.

Georges held out the open cigar-case to Oscar and to Schinner.

"The devil!" said the great painter. "Ten-sous cigars!"

"The remains of what I brought from Spain," said the adventurer. "Are you going to have breakfast?"

"No," said the artist. "They will wait for me at the castle. Beside, I had some food before starting."

"And you?" said Georges to Oscar.

"I have had breakfast," said Oscar.

Oscar would have given ten years of his life to have boots and trouser-straps. He stood sneezing, and choking, and spitting, and sucking up the smoke with ill-disguised grimaces.

"You don't know how to smoke," said Schinner. "Look here," and Schinner, without moving a muscle, drew in the smoke of his cigar and blew it out through his nose without the slightest effort. Then again he kept the smoke in his

throat, took the cigar out of his mouth, and exhaled it gracefully.

"There, young man," said the painter.

"And this, young man, is another way, watch this," said Georges, imitating Schinner, but swallowing the smoke so that none returned.

"And my parents fancy that I am educated," thought poor Oscar, trying to smoke with a grace. But he felt so mortally sick that he allowed Mistigris to bone his cigar and to say, as he puffed at it with conspicuous satisfaction—

"I suppose you have nothing catching."

But Oscar wished he were only strong enough to hit Mistigris.

"Why," said he, pointing to Colonel Georges, "eight francs for Alicante and cheese-cakes, forty sous in cigars, and his breakfast, which will cost——"

"Ten francs at least," said Mistigris. "But so it is, little dishes make long bills."

"Well, Père Léger, we can crack a bottle of Bordeaux apiece?" said Georges to the farmer.

"His breakfast will cost him twenty francs," cried Oscar. "Why, that comes to more than thirty francs!"

Crushed by the sense of his inferiority, Oscar sat down on the curbstone lost in a reverie, which hindered his observing that his trousers, hitched up as he sat, showed the line of union between an old stocking-leg and a new foot to it, a masterpiece of his mother's skill.

"Our understandings are twins, if not our soles," said Mistigris, pulling one leg of his trousers a little way up to show a similiar effect. "But a baker's children are always worst bread."

The jest made Monsieur de Sérizy smile as he stood with folded arms under the gateway behind the two lads. Heedless as they were, the solemn statesman envied them their faults; he liked their bounce, and admired the quickness of their fun.

"Well, can you get les Moulineaux? for you went to Paris to fetch the money," said the innkeeper to old Léger, having just shown him a nag for sale in his stables. "It will be a fine joke to screw a bit out of the Comte de Sérizy, a peer of France and a State Minister."

The wily old courtier betrayed nothing in his face, but he looked round to watch the farmer.

"His goose is cooked!" replied Léger in a low voice.

"So much the better; I love to see your bigwigs done. And if you want a score or so thousand francs, I will lend you the money. But François, the driver of Touchards' six-o'clock coach, told me as he went through that Monsieur Margueron is invited to dine with the Comte de Sérizy himself to-day at Presles."

"That is his excellency's plan, but we have our little notions too," replied the farmer.

"Ah, but the count will find a place for Monsieur Margueron's son, and you have no places to give away," said the innkeeper.

"No; but if the count has the Ministers on his side, I have King Louis XVIII. on mine," said Léger in the innkeeper's ear, "and forty thousand of his effigies handed over to Master Moreau will enable me to buy les Moulineaux for two hundred and sixty thousand francs before Monsieur de Sérizy can step in, and he will be glad enough to take it off my hands for three hundred and sixty thousand rather than have the lands valued lot by lot."

"Not a bad turn, master," said his friend.

"How is that for a stroke of business?" said the farmer.

"And, after all, the farm lands are worth it to him," said the innkeeper.

"Les Moulineaux pays six thousand francs a year in kind, and I mean to renew the lease at seven thousand five hundred for eighteen years. So as he invests at more than two and a half per cent., Monsieur le Comte won't be robbed.

"Not to commit Monsieur Moreau, I am to be proposed to the count by him as a tenant; he will seem to be taking care of his master's interests by finding him nearly three per cent. for his money and a farmer who will pay regularly——"

"And what will Moreau get out of the job altogether?"

"Well, if the count makes him a present of ten thousand francs, he will clear fifty thousand on the transaction; but he will have earned them fairly."

"And, after all, what does the count care for Presles? He is so rich," said the innkeeper. "I have never set eyes on him myself."

"Nor I neither," said the farmer. "But he is coming at last to live there; he would not otherwise be laying out two hundred thousand francs on redecorating the rooms. It is as fine as the King's palace."

"Well, then," replied the other, "it is high time that Moreau should feather his nest."

"Yes, yes; for when once the master and mis'ess are on the spot, they will not keep their eyes in their pockets."

Though the conversation was carried on in a low tone, the count had kept his ears open.

"Here I have all the evidence I was going in search of," thought he, looking at the burly farmer as he went back into the kitchen. "But perhaps it is no more than a scheme as yet. Perhaps Moreau has not closed with the offer——!" So averse was he to believe that the land steward was capable of mixing himself up in such a plot.

Pierrotin now came out to give his horses water. The count supposed that the driver would breakfast with the innkeeper and Léger, and what he had overheard made him fear the least betrayal.

"The whole posse are in league," thought he; "it serves them right to thwart their scheming. Pierrotin," said he in a low voice as he went up to the driver, "I promised you ten louis to keep my secret; but if you will take care not to let

out my name—and I shall know whether you have mentioned it, or given the least clue to it, to any living soul, even at l'Isle-Adam—to-morrow morning, as you pass the castle, I will give you the thousand francs to pay for your new coach. And for greater safety," added he, slapping Pierrotin's back, "do without your breakfast; stay outside with your horses."

Pierrotin had turned pale with joy.

"I understand, Monsieur le Comte, trust me. It is old Père Léger——"

"It concerns every living soul," replied the count.

"Be easy. Come, hurry up," said Pierrotin, half opening the kitchen door, "we are late already. Listen, Père Léger, there is the hill before us, you know; I am not hungry; I will go on slowly, and you will easily catch me up. A walk will do you good."

"The man is in a devil of a hurry!" said the innkeeper. "Won't you come and join us? The colonel is standing wine at fifty sous, and a bottle of champagne."

"No, I can't. I have a fish on board to be delivered at Stors by three o'clock for a big dinner; and such customers don't see a joke any more than the fish."

"All right," said Léger to the innkeeper; "put the horse you want me to buy in the shafts of your gig, and you can drive us on to pick up Pierrotin. Then we can breakfast in peace, and I shall see what the nag can do. Three of us can very well ride in your old jolter."

To the count's great satisfaction, Pierrotin himself brought out his horses. Schinner and Mistigris had walked forward.

Pierrotin picked up the two artists half-way between Saint-Brice and Poncelles; and just as he reached the top of the hill, whence they had a view of Écouen, the belfry of le Mesnil, and the woods which encircle that beautiful landscape, the sound of a galloping horse drawing a gig that rattled and jingled announced the pursuit of Père Léger and Mina's colonel, who settled themselves into the chaise again.

As Pierrotin zigzagged down the hill into Moisselles, Georges, who had never ceased expatiating to old Léger on the beauty of the innkeeper's wife at Saint-Brice, exclaimed—

"I say, this is not amiss by way of landscape, Great Painter?"

"It ought not to astonish you, who have seen Spain and the East."

"And I have two of the Spanish cigars left. If nobody objects, will you help me finish them off, Schinner? The little man had enough with a mouthful or two."

Old Léger and the count kept silence, which was taken for consent.

Oscar, annoyed at being spoken of as "a little man," retorted while the others were lighting their cigars—

"Though I have not been Mina's aide-de-camp, monsieur, and have not been in the East, I may go there yet. The career for which my parents intend me will, I hope, relieve me of the necessity of riding in a public chaise when I am as old as you are. When once I am a person of importance, and get a place, I will stay in it——"

"And the rest, certainly!" said Mistigris, imitating the sort of hoarse crow which made Oscar's speech even more ridiculous; for the poor boy was at the age when the beard begins to grow and the voice to break. "After all," added Mistigris, "extremes bleat."

"My word," said Schinner, "the horses can scarcely draw such a weight of dignity."

"So your parents intend to start you in a career," said Georges very seriously. "And what may it be?"

"In diplomacy," said Oscar.

Three shouts of laughter went forth like three rockets from Mistigris, Schinner, and the old farmer. Even the count could not help smiling. Georges kept his countenance.

"By Allah! But there is nothing to laugh at," said the colonel. "Only, young man," he went on, addressing Oscar,

"it struck me that your respectable mother is not for the moment in a social position wholly beseeming an ambassadress. She had a most venerable straw bag, and a patch on her shoe."

"My mother, monsieur!" said Oscar, fuming with indignation. "It was our housekeeper."

"'*Our*' is most aristocratic!" cried the count, interrupting Oscar.

"The king says *our*," replied Oscar haughtily.

A look from Georges checked a general burst of laughter; it conveyed to the painter and to Mistigris the desirability of dealing judiciously with Oscar, so as to make the most of this mine of amusement.

"The gentleman is right," said the painter to the count, designating Oscar. "Gentlefolk talk of *our* house; only second-rate people talk of my house. Everybody has a mania for seeming to have what he has not. For a man loaded with decorations——"

"Then, monsieur also is a decorator?" asked Mistigris.

"You know nothing of court language. I beg the favor of your protection, your excellency," added Schinner, turning to Oscar.

"I must congratulate myself," said the count, "on having traveled with three men who are or will be famous—a painter who is already illustrious, a future general, and a young diplomatist who will some day reunite Belgium to France."

But Oscar, having so basely denied his mother, and furious at perceiving that his companions were making game of him, determined to convince their incredulity at any cost.

"All is not gold that glitters!" said he, flashing lightnings from his eyes.

"You've got it wrong," cried Mistigris. "All is not old that titters. You will not go far in diplomacy if you do not know your proverbs better than that."

"If I do not know my proverbs, I know my way."

"It must be leading you a long way," said Georges, "for your family housekeeper gave you provisions enough for a sea voyage—biscuits, chocolate——"

"A particular roll and some chocolate, yes, monsieur," returned Oscar. "My stomach is much too delicate to digest the cagmag you get at an inn."

"'Cagmag' is as delicate as your digestion," retorted Georges.

"'Cagmag' is good!" said the great painter.

"The word is in use in the best circles," said Mistigris; "I use it myself at the coffee-house of the Poule Noire" (black hen).

"Your tutor was, no doubt, some famous professor—Monsieur Andrieux of the Academy or Monsieur Royer-Collard?" asked Schinner.

"My tutor was the Abbé Loraux, now the Vicar of St. Sulpice," replied Oscar, remembering the name of the confessor of the school.

"You did very wisely to have a private tutor," said Mistigris, "for the fountain—of learning—brought forth a mouse; and you will do something for your abbé, of course?"

"Certainly; he will be a bishop some day."

"And through your family interest?" asked Georges quite gravely.

"We may perhaps contribute to his due promotion, for the Abbé Frayssinous often comes to our house."

"Oh, do you know the Abbé Frayssinous?" asked the count.

"He is under obligations to my father," replied the furious Oscar.

"And you are on your way to your estate, no doubt?" said Georges.

"No, monsieur; but I have no objection to saying where I am going. I am on my way to the mansion of Presles, the Comte de Sérizy's."

"The devil you are! To Presles?" cried Schinner, turning crimson.

"Then do you know Monseigneur the Comte de Sérizy?" asked Georges.

Farmer Léger turned so as to look at Oscar with a bewildered gaze, exclaiming—

"And Monsieur le Comte is at Presles?"

"So it would seem, as I am going there," replied Oscar.

"Then you have often seen the count?" asked Monsieur de Sérizy.

"As plainly as I see you. I am great friends with his son, who is about my age, nineteen; and we ride together almost every day."

"Kings have been known to harry beggar-maids," said Mistigris sapiently.

A wink from Pierrotin had relieved the farmer's alarm.

"On my honor," said the count to Oscar, "I am delighted to find myself in the company of a young gentleman who can speak with authority of that nobleman. I am anxious to secure his favor in a somewhat important business in which his help will cost him nothing. It is a little claim against the American Government. I should be glad to learn something as to the sort of man he is."

"Oh, if you hope to succeed," replied Oscar, with an assumption of competence, "do not apply to him, but to his wife; he is madly in love with her, no one knows that better than I, and his wife cannot endure him."

"Why?" asked Georges.

"The count has some skin disease that makes him hideous, and Doctor Alibert has tried in vain to cure it. Monsieur de Sérizy would give half of his immense fortune to have a chest like mine," said Oscar, opening his shirt and showing a clean pink skin like a child's. "He lives alone, secluded in his house. You need a good introduction to see him at all. In the first place, he gets up very early in the morning, and works

from three till eight, after eight he follows various treatments, sulphur baths or vapor baths. They stew him in a sort of iron tank, for he is always hoping to be cured."

"If he is so intimate with the King, why is he not 'touched' by him?" asked Georges.

"Then the lady keeps her husband in hot water," said Mistigris.

"The count has promised thirty thousand francs to a famous Scotch physician who is prescribing for him now," Oscar went on.

"Then his wife can hardly be blamed for giving herself the best——" Schinner began, but he did not finish his sentence.

"To be sure," said Oscar. "The poor man is so shriveled, so decrepit, you would think he was eighty. He is as dry as parchment, and, to add to his misfortune, he feels his position——"

"And feels it hot, I should think," remarked the farmer facetiously.

"Monsieur, he worships his wife, and dares not blame her," replied Oscar. "He performs the most ridiculous scenes with her, you would die of laughing—exactly like Arnolphe in Molière's play."

The count, in blank dismay, looked at Pierrotin, who, seeing him apparently unmoved, concluded that Madame Clapart's son was inventing a pack of slander.

"So, monsieur, if you wish to succeed," said Oscar to the count, "apply to the Marquis d'Aiglemont. If you have madame's former adorer on your side, you will at one stroke secure both the lady and her husband."

"That is what we call killing two-thirds with one bone," said Mistigris.

"Dear me!" said the painter, "have you seen the count undressed? Are you his valet?"

"His valet!" cried Oscar.

"By the mass! A man does not say such things about his

friends in a public conveyance," added Mistigris. "Discretion, my young friend, is the mother of inattention. I simply don't hear you."

"It is certainly a case of tell me whom you know, and I will tell you whom you hate," exclaimed Schinner.

"But you must learn, Great Painter," said Georges pompously, "that no man can speak ill of those he does not know. The boy has proved at any rate that he knows his Sérizy by heart. Now, if he had only talked of madame, it might have been supposed that he was on terms——"

"Not another word about the Comtesse de Sérizy, young men!" cried the count. "Her brother, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, is a friend of mine, and the man who is so rash as to cast a doubt on the countess' honor will answer to me for his speech."

"Monsieur is right," said the artist, "there should be no scandal spoken about women."

"*God, Honor, and the Ladies!* I saw a melodrama of that name," said Mistigris.

"Though I do not know Mina, I know the keeper of the seals," said the count, looking at Georges. "And though I do not display my orders," he added, turning to the painter, "I can hinder their being given to those who do not deserve them. In short, I know so many people, that I know Monsieur Grindot, the architect of Presles. Stop at the next inn, Pierrotin; I am going to get out."

Pierrotin drove on to the village of Moisselles, and there, at a little country inn, the travelers alighted. This bit of road was passed in utter silence.

"Where on earth is that little rascal going?" asked the count, leading Pierrotin into the inn-yard.

"To stay with your steward. He is the son of a poor lady who lives in the Rue de la Cerisaie, and to whom I often carry fruit and game and poultry—a certain Madame Husson."

"Who is that gentleman?" old Léger asked Pierrotin when the count had turned away.

"I don't know," said Pierrotin. "He never rode with me before; but he may be the prince who owns the castle of Maffliers. He has just told me where to set him down on the road; he is not going so far as l'Isle-Adam."

"Pierrotin fancies he is the owner of Maffliers," said the farmer to Georges, getting back into the chaise.

At this stage the three young fellows, looking as silly as pilferers caught in the act, did not dare meet each other's eye, and seemed lost in reflections on the upshot of their several fictions.

"That is what I call a great lie and little wool," observed Mistigris.

"You see, I know the count," said Oscar.

"Possibly, but you will never be an ambassador," replied Georges. "If you must talk in a public carriage, learn to talk like me and tell nothing."

"The mother of mischief is no more than a midge's sting," said Mistigris conclusively.

The count now got into the chaise, and Pierrotin drove on; perfect silence reigned.

"Well, my good friends," said the count, as they reached the wood of Carreau, "we are all as mute as if we were going to execution."

"Silence gives content. A man should know that silence is a bold 'un," said Mistigris with an air.

"It is a fine day," remarked Georges.

"What place is that?" asked Oscar, pointing to the castle of Franconville, which shows so finely on the slope of the great forest of Saint-Martin.

"What!" said the count, "you who have been so often to Presles, do not know Franconville when you see it?"

"Monsieur knows more of men than of houses," said Mistigris.

"A sucking diplomatist may sometimes be oblivious," exclaimed Georges.

"Remember my name!" cried Oscar in a fury, "it is Oscar Husson, and in ten years' time I shall be famous."

After this speech, pronounced with great bravado, Oscar huddled himself into his corner.

"Husson de—what?" asked Mistigris.

"A great family," replied the count. "The Hussons de la Cerisaie. The gentleman was born at the foot of the Imperial throne."

Oscar blushed to the roots of his hair in an agony of alarm. They were about to descend the steep hill by la Cave, at the bottom of which, in a narrow valley, on the skirt of the forest of Saint-Martin, stands the splendid castle of Presles.

"Gentlemen," said Monsieur de Sérizy, "I wish you well in your several careers. You, Monsieur le Colonel, make your peace with the King of France; the Czerni-Georges must be on good terms with the Bourbons. I have no forecast for you, my dear Monsieur Schinner; your fame is already made, and you have won it nobly by splendid work. But you are such a dangerous man that I, who have a wife, should not dare to offer you a commission under my roof. As to Monsieur Husson, he needs no interest; he is the master of statesmen's secrets, and can make them tremble. Monsieur Léger is going to steal a march on the Comte de Sérizy; I only hope that he may hold his own. Put me down here, Pierrotin, and you can take me up at the same spot to-morrow!" added the count, who got out, leaving his fellow-travelers quite confounded.

"When you take to your heels you can't take too much," remarked Mistigris, seeing how nimbly the traveler vanished in a sunken path.

"Oh, he must be the count who has taken Franconville; he is going that way," said Père Léger.

"If ever again I try to humbug in a public carriage I will

call myself out," said the false Schinner. "It is partly your fault too, Mistigris," said he, giving his boy a rap on his cap.

"Oh, ho! I—who only followed you to Venice," replied Mistigris. "But play a dog a bad game and slang him."

"Do you know," said Georges to Oscar, "that if by any chance that was the Comte de Sérizy, I should be sorry to find myself in your skin, although it is so free from disease."

Oscar, reminded by these words of his mother's advice, turned pale, and was quite sobered.

"Here you are, gentlemen," said Pierrotin, pulling up at a handsome gate.

"Are where?" exclaimed the painter, Georges, and Oscar all in a breath.

"That's a stiff one!" cried Pierrotin. "Do you mean to say, gentlemen, that neither of you has ever been here before? There stands the castle of Presles!"

"All right," said Georges, recovering himself. "I am going on to the farm of les Moulineaux," he added, not choosing to tell his fellow-travelers that he was bound for the house.

"Then you are coming with me," said Léger.

"How is that?"

"I am the farmer at les Moulineaux. And what do you want of me, colonel?"

"A taste of your butter," said Georges, pulling out his portfolio.

"Pierrotin, drop my things at the steward's," said Oscar; "I am going straight to the house." And he plunged into a cross-path without knowing whither it led.

"Halloo! Mr. Ambassador," cried Pierrotin, "you are going into the forest. If you want to get to the castle, go in by the side-gate."

Thus compelled to go in, Oscar made his way into the spacious courtyard with a huge stone-edged flower-bed in the middle, and stone posts all round with chains between. While

Père Léger stood watching Oscar, Georges, thunderstruck at hearing the burly farmer describe himself as the owner of les Moulineaux, vanished so nimbly that, when the fat man looked round for his colonel, he could not find him.

At Pierrotin's request the gate was opened, and he went in with much dignity to deposit the Great Schinner's multifarious properties at the lodge. Oscar was in dismay at seeing Mistigris and the artist, the witnesses of his brag, really admitted to the castle.

In ten minutes Pierrotin had unloaded the chaise of the painter's paraphernalia, Oscar Husson's luggage, and the neat leather portmanteau, which he mysteriously confided to the lodge-keeper. Then he turned his machine, cracking his whip energetically, and went on his way to the woods of l'Isle Adam, his face still wearing the artful expression of a peasant summing up his profits.

Nothing was wanting to his satisfaction. On the morrow he would have his thousand francs.

Oscar, with his tail between his legs, so to speak, wandered round the great court, waiting to see what would become of his traveling companions, when he presently saw Monsieur Moreau come out of the large entrance-hall known as the guardroom, on to the front steps. The land steward, who wore a long, blue riding-coat cut down to his heels, had on nankin-colored breeches and hunting-boots, and carried a crop in his hand.

"Well, my boy, so here you are? And how is the dear mother?" said he, shaking hands with Oscar. "Good-morning, gentlemen; you, no doubt, are the painters promised us by Monsieur Grindot, the architect?" said he to the artists.

He whistled twice, using the end of his riding-whip, and the lodge-keeper came forward.

"Take these gentlemen to their rooms—Nos. 14 and 15; Madame Moreau will give you the keys. Light fires this

evening, if necessary, and carry up their things. I am instructed by Monsieur le Comte to ask you to dine with me," he added, addressing the artists. "At five, as in Paris. If you are sportsmen, you can be well amused. I have permission to shoot and fish, and we have twelve thousand acres of shooting outside our own grounds."

Oscar, the painter, and Mistigris, one as much disconcerted as the other, exchanged glances. Still, Mistigris, faithful to his instincts, exclaimed—

"Pooh, never throw the candle after the shade!* On we go!"

Little Husson followed the steward, who led the way, walking quickly across the park.

"Jacques," said he to one of his sons, "go and tell your mother that young Husson has arrived, and say that I am obliged to go over to les Moulineaux for a few minutes."

Moreau, now about fifty years of age, a dark man of medium height, had a stern expression. His bilious complexion, highly colored nevertheless by a country life, suggested, at first sight, a character very unlike what his really was. Everything contributed to the illusion. His hair was turning gray, his blue eyes and a large aquiline nose gave him a sinister expression, all the more so because his eyes were too close together; still, his full lips, the shape of his face, and the good-humor of his address, would, to a keen observer, have been indications of kindliness. His very decided manner and abrupt way of speech impressed Oscar immensely with a sense of his penetration, arising from his real affection for the boy. Brought up by his mother to look up to the steward as a great man, Oscar always felt small in Moreau's presence; and now, finding himself at Presles, he felt an oppressive uneasiness, as if he had some ill to fear from this fatherly friend, who was his only protector.

"Why, my dear Oscar, you do not look glad to be here,"

* In original: *Veni, vidi cecidi.*

said the steward. "But you will have plenty to amuse you; you can learn to ride, to shoot, and hunt."

"I know nothing of such things," said Oscar dully.

"But I have asked you here on purpose to teach you."

"Mamma told me not to stay more than a fortnight, because Madame Moreau——"

"Oh, well, we shall see," replied Moreau, almost offended by Oscar's doubts of his conjugal influence.

Moreau's youngest son, a lad of fifteen, active and brisk, now came running up.

"Here," said his father, "take your new companion to your mother."

And the steward himself went off by the shortest path to a keeper's hut between the park and the wood.

The handsome lodge, given by the count as his land steward's residence, had been built some years before the Revolution, by the owner of the famous estate of Cassan or Bergeret, a farmer-general of enormous wealth, who made himself as notorious for extravagance as Bodard, Pâris, and Bouret, laying out gardens, diverting rivers, building hermitages, Chinese temples, and other costly magnificence.

This house, in the middle of a large garden, of which one wall divided it from the outbuildings of Presles, had formerly had its entrance on the village High Street. Monsieur de Sérizy's father, when he purchased the property, had only to pull down the dividing wall and build up the front gate to make this plot and house part of the outbuildings. Then, by pulling down another wall, he added to his park all the garden land that the former owner had purchased to complete his ring-fence.

The lodge, built of freestone, was in the Louis XV. style, with linen-pattern panels under the windows, like those on the colonnades of the Place Louis XV., in stiff, angular folds; it consisted, on the first floor, of a fine drawing-room opening into a bedroom, and of a dining-room, with a billiard-room

adjoining. These two suites, parallel to each other, were divided by a sort of anteroom or hall, and the stairs. The hall was decorated by the doors of the drawing-room and dining-room, both handsomely ornamental. The kitchen was under the dining-room, for there was a flight of ten outside steps.

Madame Moreau had taken the second floor for her own, and had transformed what had been the best bedroom into a boudoir; this boudoir, and the drawing-room below, handsomely fitted up with the best pickings of the old furniture from the castle, would certainly have done no discredit to the mansion of a lady of fashion. The drawing-room, hung with blue-and-white damask, the spoils of a state bed, and with old gilded-wood furniture upholstered with the same silk, displayed ample curtains to the doors and windows. Some pictures that had formerly been panels, with flower-stands, a few modern tables, and handsome lamps, beside an antique hanging chandelier of cut-glass, gave the room a very dignified effect. The carpet was old Persian.

The boudoir was altogether modern and fitted to Madame Moreau's taste, in imitation of a tent, with blue silk ropes on a light gray ground. There was the usual divan with pillows and cushions for the feet, and the flower-stands, carefully cherished by the head-gardener, were a joy to the eye with their pyramids of flowers.

The dining-room and billiard-room were fitted with mahogany. All round the house the steward's lady had planned a flower-garden, beautifully kept, and beyond it lay the park. Clumps of foreign shrubs shut out the stables, and to give admission from the road to her visitors she had opened a gate where the old entrance had been built up.

Thus, the dependent position filled by the Moreaus was cleverly glossed over; and they were the better able to figure as rich folk managing a friend's estate for their pleasure, because neither the count nor the countess ever came to quash

their pretensions; and the liberality of Monsieur de Sérizy's concessions allowed of their living in abundance, the luxury of country homes. Dairy produce, eggs, poultry, game, fruit, forage, flowers, wood, and vegetables—the steward and his wife had all of these in profusion, and bought literally nothing but butcher's meat and the wine and foreign produce necessary to their lordly extravagance. The poultry-wife made the bread; and, in fact, for the last few years, Moreau had paid his butcher's bill with the pigs of the farm, keeping only as much pork as he needed.

One day the countess, always very generous to her former lady's-maid, made Madame Moreau a present, as a souvenir perhaps, of a little traveling chaise of a past fashion, which Moreau had furbished up, and in which his wife drove out behind a pair of good horses, useful at other times in the grounds. Beside this pair, the steward had his saddle-horse. He ploughed part of the park-land, and raised grain enough to feed the beasts and servants; he cut three hundred tons more or less of good hay, accounting for no more than one hundred, encroaching on the license vaguely granted by the count; and instead of using his share of the produce on the premises, he sold it. He kept his poultry-farm, his pigeons, and his cows on the crops from the park-land; but then the manure from his stables was used in the count's garden. Each of these pilfering acts had an excuse ready.

Madame Moreau's house-servant was the daughter of one of the gardeners, and waited on her and cooked; she was helped in the housework by a girl, who also attended to the poultry and dairy. Moreau had engaged an invalided soldier named Brochon to look after the horses and do the dirty work.

At Nerville, at Chauvry, at Beaumont, at Maffliers, at Préroles, at Nointel, the steward's pretty wife was everywhere received by persons who did not, or affected not to, know her original position in life. And Moreau could confer obligations. He could use his master's interest in matters which are

of immense importance in the depths of the country though trivial in Paris. After securing for friends the appointments of justice of the peace at Beaumont and at l'Isle-Adam, he had, in the course of the same year, saved an inspector of forest-lands from dismissal, and obtained the cross of the Legion of Honor for the quartermaster at Beaumont. So there was never a festivity among the more respectable neighbors without Monsieur and Madame Moreau being invited. The curé and the Mayor of Presles were to be seen every evening at their house. A man can hardly help being a good fellow when he has made himself so comfortable.

So Madame la Régisseuse—a pretty woman, and full of airs, like every grand lady's servant who, when she marries, apes her mistress—introduced the latest fashions, wore the most expensive shoes, and never walked out but in fine weather. Though her husband gave her no more than five hundred francs a year for dress, this in the country is a very large sum, especially when judiciously spent; and his "lady," fair, bright, and fresh-looking, at the age of thirty-six, and remaining slight, neat, and attractive in spite of her three children, still played the girl, and gave herself the airs of a princess. If, as she drove past in her open chaise on her way to Beaumont, some stranger happened to inquire, "Who is that?" Madame Moreau was furious if a native of the place replied, "She is the steward's wife at Presles." She aimed at being taken for the mistress of the mansion.

She amused herself with patronizing the villagers, as a great lady might have done. Her husband's power with the count, proved in so many ways, hindered the townsfolk from laughing at Madame Moreau, who was a person of importance in the eyes of the peasantry.

Estelle, however—her name was Estelle—did not interfere in the management, any more than a stockbroker's wife interferes in dealings on the Bourse; she even relied on her husband for the administration of the house and of their income.

Quite confident in her own powers of pleasing, she was miles away from imagining that this delightful life, which had gone on for seventeen years, could ever be in danger; however, on hearing that the count had resolved on restoring the splendid castle of Presles, she understood that all her enjoyments were imperiled, and she had persuaded her husband to come to terms with Léger, so as to have a retreat at l'Isle-Adam. She could not have borne to find herself in an almost servile position in the presence of her former mistress, who would undoubtedly laugh at her on finding her established at the lodge in a style that aped the lady of fashion.

The origin of the deep-seated enmity between the Reyberts and the Moreaus lay in a stab inflicted on Madame Moreau by Madame de Reybert in revenge for a pin-prick that the steward's wife had dared to give on the first arrival of the Reyberts, lest her supremacy should be infringed on by the lady *née* de Corroy. Madame de Reybert had mentioned, and perhaps for the first time informed the neighborhood, of Madame Moreau's original calling. The words *lady's-maid* flew from lip to lip. All those who envied the Moreaus—and they must have been many—at Beaumont, at l'Isle-Adam, at Maffliers, at Champagne, at Nerville, at Chauvry, at Baillet, at Moisselles, made such pregnant comments that more than one spark from this conflagration fell into the Moreaus' home. For four years, now, the Reyberts, excommunicated by their pretty rival, had become the object of so much hostile animadversion from her partisans that their position would have been untenable but for the thought of vengeance which had sustained them to this day.

The Moreaus, who were very good friends with Grindot the architect, had been told by him of the arrival ere long of a painter commissioned to finish the decorative panels at the castle, Schinner having executed the more important pieces. This great painter recommended the artist we have seen

traveling with Mistigris, to paint the borders, arabesques, and other accessory decorations. Hence, for two days past, Madame Moreau had been preparing her war-paint and sitting expectant. An artist who was to board with her for some weeks was worthy of some outlay. Schinner and his wife had been quartered in the castle, where, by the count's orders, they had been entertained like my lord himself. Grindot, who boarded with the Moreaus, had treated the great artist with so much respect that neither the steward nor his wife had ventured on any familiarity. And, indeed, the richest and most noble landowners in the district had vied with each other in entertaining Schinner and his wife. So now Madame Moreau, much pleased at the prospect of turning the tables, promised herself that she would sound the trumpet before the artist who was to be her guest, and make him out a match in talent for Schinner.

Although on the two previous days she had achieved very coquettish toilets, the steward's pretty wife had husbanded her resources too well not to have reserved the most bewitching till the Saturday, never doubting that on that day at any rate the artist would arrive to dinner. She had shod herself in bronze kid with fine thread stockings. A dress of finely striped pink-and-white muslin, a pink belt with a chased gold buckle, a cross and heart round her neck, and wristlets of black velvet on her bare arms—Madame de Sérizy had fine arms, and was fond of displaying them—gave Madame Moreau the style of a fashionable Parisian. She put on a very handsome Leghorn hat, graced with a bunch of moss roses made by Nattier, and under its broad shade her fair hair flowed in glossy curls.

Having ordered a first-rate dinner and carefully inspected the rooms, she went out at an hour which brought her to the large flower-bed in the court of the castle, like the lady of the house, just when the coach would pass. Over her head she held a very elegant pink silk parasol lined with white and

trimmed with fringe. On seeing Pierrotin hand over to the lodge-keeper the artist's extraordinary-looking baggage, and perceiving no owner, Estelle had returned home lamenting the waste of another carefully arranged toilet. And, like most people who have dressed for an occasion, she felt quite incapable of any occupation but that of doing nothing in her drawing-room while waiting for the passing of the Beaumont coach which should come through an hour after Pierrotin's, though it did not start from Paris till one o'clock; thus she was waiting at home while the two young artists were dressing for dinner. In fact, the young painter and Mistigris were so overcome by the description of lovely Madame Moreau given them by the gardener whom they had questioned, that it was obvious to them both that they must get themselves into their best "toggery." So they donned their very best before presenting themselves at the steward's house, whither they were conducted by Jacques Moreau, the eldest of the children, a stalwart youth, dressed in the English fashion, in a round jacket with a turned-down collar, and as happy during the holidays as a fish in water, here on the estate where his mother reigned supreme.

"Mamma," said he, "here are the two artists come from Monsieur Schinner."

Madame Moreau, very agreeably surprised, rose, bid her son set chairs, and displayed all her graces.

"Mamma, little Husson is with father; shall I fetch him?" whispered the boy in her ear.

"There is no hurry, you can stop and amuse him," said the mother.

The mere words "there is no hurry" showed the two artists how entirely unimportant was their traveling companion, but the tone also betrayed the indifference of a stepmother for her stepchild. In fact, Madame Moreau, who, after seventeen years of married life, could not fail to be aware of her husband's attachment to Madame Clapart and young

Husson, hated the mother and son in so overt a manner that it is easy to understand why Moreau had never till now ventured to invite Oscar to Presles.

"We are requested, my husband and I," said she to the two artists, "to do the honors of the castle. We are fond of art, and more especially of artists," said she, with a simper, "and I beg you to consider yourselves quite at home here. In the country, you see, there is no ceremony; liberty is indispensable, otherwise life is too insipid. We have had Monsieur Schinner here already——"

Mistigris gave his companion a mischievous wink.

"You know him, of course," said Estelle, after a pause.

"Who does not know him, madame?" replied the painter.

"He is as well known as the parish birch," added Mistigris.

"Monsieur Grindot mentioned your name," said Madame Moreau, "but really I——"

"Joseph Bridau, madame," replied the artist, extremely puzzled as to what this woman could be.

Mistigris was beginning to fume inwardly at this fair lady's patronizing tone; still, he waited, as Bridau did too, for some movement, some chance word to enlighten them, one of those expressions of assumed fine-ladyism, which painters, those born and cruel observers of folly—the perennial food of their pencil—seize on in an instant. In the first place, Estelle's large hands and feet, those of a peasant from the district of Saint-Lô, struck them at once; and before long one or two lady's-maid's phrases, modes of speech that gave the lie to the elegance of her dress, betrayed their prey into the hands of the artist and his apprentice. They exchanged a look which pledged them both to take Estelle quite seriously as a pastime during their stay.

"You are so fond of art, perhaps you cultivate it with success, madame?" said Joseph Bridau.

"No. Though my education was not neglected, it was purely commercial. But I have such a marked and delicate

feeling for art, that Monsieur Schinner always begged me, when he had finished a piece, to give him my opinion."

"Just as Molière consulted La Forêt," said Mistigris.

Not knowing that La Forêt was a servant-girl, Madame Moreau responded with a graceful droop, showing that in her ignorance she regarded this speech as a compliment.

"How is it that he did not propose just to knock off your head?" said Bridau. "Painters are generally on the lookout for handsome women."

"What is your meaning, pray?" said Madame Moreau, on whose face dawned the wrath of an offended queen.

"In studio slang, to knock a thing off is to sketch it," said Mistigris, in an ingratiating tone, "and all we ask is to have handsome heads to sketch. And we sometimes say in admiration that a woman's beauty has knocked us over."

"Ah, I did not know the origin of the phrase!" replied she, with a look of languishing sweetness at Mistigris.

"My pupil, Monsieur Léon de Lora," said Bridau, "has a great talent for likeness. He would be only too happy, fair being, to leave you a souvenir of his skill by painting your charming face."

And Bridau signaled to Mistigris, as much as to say, "Come, drive it home, she really is not amiss!"

Taking this hint, Léon de Lora moved to the sofa by Estelle's side, and took her hand, which she left in his.

"Oh! if only as a surprise to your husband, madame, you could give me a few sittings in secret, I would try to excel myself. You are so lovely, so young, so charming! A man devoid of talent might become a genius with you for his model! In your eyes he would find——"

"And we would represent your sweet children in our arabesques," said Joseph, interrupting Mistigris.

"I would rather have them in my own drawing-room; but that would be asking too much," said she, looking coquettishly at Bridau.

"Beauty, madame, is a queen whom painters worship, and who has every right to command them."

"They are quite charming," thought Madame Moreau. "Do you like driving out in the evening, after dinner, in an open carriage, in the woods?"

"Oh! oh! oh! oh!" cried Mistigris, in ecstatic tones at each added detail. "Why, Presles, will be an earthly paradise."

"With a fair-haired Eve, a young and bewitching woman," added Bridau.

Just as Madame Moreau was preening herself, and soaring into the seventh heaven, she was brought down again like a kite by a tug at the cord.

"Madame!" exclaimed the maid, bouncing in like a cannon ball.

"Bless me, Rosalie, what can justify you in coming in like this without being called?"

Rosalie did not trouble her head about this apostrophe, but said in her mistress' ear—

"Monsieur le Comte is here."

"Did he ask for me?" said the steward's wife.

"No, madame—but—he wants his portmanteau and the key of his room."

"Let him have them then," said she, with a cross shrug to disguise her uneasiness.

"Mamma, here is Oscar Husson!" cried her youngest son, bringing in Oscar, who, as red as a poppy, dared not come forward as he saw the two painters in different dress.

"So here you are at last, boy," said Estelle coldly. "You are going to dress, I hope?" she went on, after looking at him from head to foot with great contempt. "I suppose your mother has not brought you up to dine in company in such clothes as those."

"Oh, no," said the ruthless Mistigris, "a coming diplomatist must surely have a seat—to his trousers! A coat to dine saves wine."

"A coming diplomatist?" cried Madame Moreau.

The tears rose to poor Oscar's eyes as he looked from Joseph to Léon.

"Only a jest by the way," replied Joseph, who wished to help Oscar in his straits.

"The boy wanted to make fun as we did and he tried to humbug," said the merciless Mistigris. "And now he finds himself the ass with a lion's grin."

"Madame," said Rosalie, coming back to the drawing-room door, "his excellency has ordered dinner for eight persons at six o'clock; what is to be done?"

While Estelle and her maid were holding counsel, the artists and Oscar gazed at each other, their eyes big with terrible apprehensions.

"His excellency—Who?" said Joseph Bridau.

"Why, Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy," replied little Moreau.

"Was it he, by chance, in the coucou?" said Léon de Lora.

"Oh!" exclaimed Oscar, "the Comte de Sérizy would surely never travel but in a coach and four."

"How did he come, madame—the Comte de Sérizy?" the painter asked of Madame Moreau when she came back very much upset.

"I have no idea," said she. "I cannot account for his coming, nor guess what he has come for. And Moreau is out!"

"His excellency begs you will go over to the castle, Monsieur Schinner," said the gardener, coming to the door, "and he begs you will give him the pleasure of your company at dinner, as well as Monsieur Mistigris."

"Our goose is cooked!" said the lad with a laugh. "The man we took for a country worthy in Pierrotin's chaise was the count. So true is it that what you seek you never bind," he added.

Oscar was almost turning to a pillar of salt; for, on hearing this, his throat felt as salt as the sea.

"And you! Who told him all about his wife's adorers and his skin disease?" said Mistigris to Oscar.

"What do you mean?" cried the steward's wife, looking at the two artists, who went off laughing at Oscar's face.

Oscar stood speechless, thunderstruck; hearing nothing, though Madame Moreau was questioning him and shaking him violently by one of his arms, which she had seized and clutched tightly; but she was obliged to leave him where he was without having extracted a reply, for Rosalie called her again to give out linen and plate, and to request her to attend in person to the numerous orders given by the count. The house-servants, the gardeners, everybody on the place, were rushing to and fro in such confusion as may be imagined.

The master had in fact dropped on the household like a shell from a mortar. From above la Cave the count had made his way by a path, familiar to him, to the gamekeeper's hut, and reached it before Moreau. The gamekeeper was amazed to see his real master.

"Is Moreau here, I see his horse waiting?" asked Monsieur de Sérizy.

"No, monseigneur; but as he is going over to les Moulineaux before dinner, he left his horse here while he ran across to give some orders at the house."

The gamekeeper had no idea of the effect of this reply, which, under existing circumstances, was, in the eyes of a clear-sighted man, tantamount to assurance.

"If you value your place," said the count to the keeper, "ride as fast as you can pelt to Beaumont on this horse, and deliver to Monsieur Margueron a note I will give you."

The count went into the man's lodge, wrote a line, folded it in such a manner that it could not be opened without detection, and gave it to the man as soon as he was in the saddle.

"Not a word to any living soul," said he. "And you, madame," he added to the keeper's wife, "if Moreau is surprised at not finding his horse here, tell him merely that I took it."

And the count went off across the park, through the gate which was opened for him at his nod.

Inured though a man may be to the turmoil of political life, with its excitement and vicissitudes, the soul of a man who, at the count's age, is still firm enough to love, is also young enough to feel a betrayal. It was so hard to believe that Moreau was deceiving him, that at Saint-Brice Monsieur de Sérizy had supposed him to be not so much in league with Léger and the notary as, in fact, led away by them. And so, standing in the inn gateway, as he heard Père Léger talking to the innkeeper, he intended to forgive his land steward after a severe reproof.

And then, strange to say, the dishonesty of his trusted agent had seemed no more than an episode when Oscar had blurted out the noble infirmities of the intrepid traveler, the Minister of Napoleon. Secrets so strictly kept could only have been revealed by Moreau, who had no doubt spoken contemptuously of his benefactor to Madame de Sérizy's former maid, or to the erstwhile Aspasia of the Directoire.

As he made his way down the cross-road to the castle, the peer of France, the great minister, had shed bitter tears, weeping as a boy weeps. They were his last tears that he shed! Every human feeling at once was so cruelly, so mercilessly attacked, that this self-controlled man rushed on across his park like a hunted animal.

When Moreau asked for his horse, and the keeper's wife replied—

"Monsieur le Comte has just taken it."

"Who—Monsieur le Comte?" cried he.

"Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy, the master," said she. "Perhaps he is at the castle," added she, to get rid of the

steward, who, quite bewildered by this occurrence, went off toward the house.

But he presently returned to question the keeper's wife, for it had struck him that there was some serious motive for his master's secret arrival and unwonted conduct. The woman, terrified at finding herself in a vise, as it were, between the count and the steward, had shut herself into her lodge, quite determined only to open the door to her husband. Moreau, more and more uneasy, hurried across to the gatekeeper's lodge, where he was told that the count was dressing. Rosalie, whom he met, announced: "Seven people to dine at the count's table."

Moreau next went home, where he found the poultry-girl in hot discussion with an odd-looking young man.

"Monsieur le Comte told us, 'Mina's aide-de-camp and a colonel,'" the girl insisted.

"I am not a colonel," replied Georges.

"Well, but is your name Georges?"

"What is the matter?" asked the steward, intervening.

"Monsieur, my name is Georges Marest; I am the son of a rich hardware dealer, wholesale, in the Rue Saint-Martin, and I have come on business to Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy from Maître Crottat, his notary—I am his second clerk."

"And I can only repeat, sir, what monsieur said to me—'A gentleman will come,' says he, 'a Colonel Czerni-Georges, aide-de-camp to Mina, who traveled down in Pierrotin's chaise. If he asks for me, show him at once into the drawing-room.'"

"There is no joking with his excellency," said the steward. "You had better go in, monsieur. But how is it that his excellency came down without announcing his purpose? And how does he know that you traveled by Pierrotin's chaise?"

"It is perfectly clear," said the clerk, "that the count is the gentleman who, but for the civility of a young man, would have had to ride on the front seat of Pierrotin's coucou."

"On the front seat of Pierrotin's coucou?" cried the steward and the farm-girl.

"I am quite sure of it from what this girl tells me," said Georges Marest.

"But how——?" the steward began.

"Ah, there you are!" cried Georges. "To humbug the other travelers, I told them a heap of cock-and-bull stories about Egypt, Greece, and Spain. I had spurs on, and I gave myself out as a colonel in the cavalry—a mere joke."

"And what was the gentleman like, whom you believe to be the count?" asked Moreau.

"Why, he has a face the color of brick," said Georges, "with perfectly white hair and black eyebrows."

"That is the man!"

"I am done for!" said Georges Marest.

"Why?"

"I made fun of his orders."

"Pooh, he is a thorough good fellow; you will have amused him. Come to the castle forthwith," said Moreau. "I am going up to the count. Where did he leave you?"

"At the top of the hill."

"I can make neither head nor tail of it!" cried Moreau.

"After all, I poked fun at him, but I did not insult him," said the clerk to himself.

"And what are you here for?" asked the steward.

"I have brought the deed of sale of the farm-lands of les Moulineaux, ready made out."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Moreau. "I don't understand."

Moreau felt his heart beat painfully when, after knocking two raps on his master's door, he heard in reply—

"Is that you, Monsieur Moreau?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Come in."

The count was dressed in white trousers and thin boots, a

white vest, and a black coat on which glittered, on the right-hand side, the star of the grand cross of the Legion of Honor, and on the left, from a buttonhole, hung that of the Golden Fleece from a gold chain; the blue ribbon was conspicuous across his vest. He had dressed his hair himself, and had no doubt got himself up to do the honors of Presles to Margueron, and, perhaps, to impress that worthy with the atmosphere of grandeur.

"Well, monsieur," said the count, who remained sitting, but allowed Moreau to stand, "so we cannot come to terms with Margueron?"

"At the present moment he wants entirely too much for his farm."

"But why should he not come over here to talk about it?" said the count in an absent-minded way.

"He is ill, monseigneur——"

"Are you sure?"

"I went over there——"

"Monsieur," said the count, assuming a stern expression that was terrible, "what would you do to a man whom you had allowed to see you dress a wound you wished to keep secret, and who went off to make game of it with a street trollop?"

"I should give him a sound thrashing."

"And if, in addition to this, you discovered that he was cheating your confidence and robbing you?"

"I should try to catch him out and send him to the hulks."

"Listen, Monsieur Moreau. You have, I suppose, discussed my health with Madame Clapart and made fun at her house of my devotion to my wife, for little Husson was giving to the passengers in a public conveyance a vast deal of information with reference to my cures, in my presence, this very morning, and in what words! God knows! He dared to slander my wife.

"Again, I heard from Farmer Léger's own lips, as he re-

turned from Paris in Pierrotin's chaise, of the plan concocted by the notary of Beaumont with him, and with you, with reference to les Moulineaux. If you have been at all to see Margueron, it was to instruct him to sham illness; he is so little ill that I expect him to dinner, and he is coming. Well, monsieur, as to your having made a fortune of two hundred and fifty thousand francs in seventeen years—I forgive you. I understand it. If you had but asked me for what you took from me, or what others offered you, I would have given it to you; you have a family to provide for. Even with your want of delicacy you have treated me better than another might have done, that I believe——

"But that you, who know all that I have done for my country, for France, you who have seen me sit up a hundred nights and more to work for the Emperor, or toiling eighteen hours a day for three months on end; that you, who know my worship of Madame de Sérizy, should have gossiped about it before a boy, have betrayed my secrets to the mockery of a Madame Husson——"

"Monseigneur!"

"It is unpardonable. To damage a man's interest is nothing, but to strike at his heart! Ah! you do not know what you have done!"

The count covered his face with his hands and was silent for a moment.

"I leave you in possession of what you have," he went on, "and I will forget you. As a point of dignity, of honor, we will part without quarreling, for, at this moment, I can remember what your father did for mine.

"You must come to terms—good terms—with Monsieur de Reybert, your successor. Be calm, as I am. Do not make yourself a spectacle for fools. Above all, no bluster and no haggling. Though you have forfeited my confidence, try to preserve the decorum of wealth. As to the little wretch who has half killed me, he is not to sleep at Presles. Send him

to the inn; I cannot answer for what I might do if he crossed my path."

"I do not deserve such leniency, monseigneur," said Moreau, with tears in his eyes. "If I had been utterly dishonest I should have five hundred thousand francs; and indeed I will gladly account for every franc in detail. But permit me to assure you, monseigneur, that when I spoke of you to Madame Clapart it was never in derision. On the contrary, it was to deplore your condition and to ask her whether she did not know of some remedy, unfamiliar to the medical profession, which the common people use. I have spoken of you in the boy's presence when he was asleep—but he heard me, it would seem!—and always in terms of the deepest affection and respect. Unfortunately, a blunder is sometimes punished as a crime. Still, while I bow to the decisions of your just anger, I would have you to know what really happened. Yes, it was heart to heart that I spoke of you to Madame Clapart. And only ask my wife; never have I mentioned these matters to her——"

"That will do," said the count, whose conviction was complete. "We are not children; the past is irrevocable—— Go and set your affairs and mine in order. You may remain in the lodge till the month of October. Monsieur and Madame de Reybert will live in the castle. Above all, try to live with them as gentlemen should—hating each other, but keeping up appearances."

The count and Moreau went downstairs, Moreau as white as the count's hair, Monsieur de Sérizy calm and dignified.

While this scene was going forward, the Beaumont coach, leaving Paris at one o'clock, had stopped at the gate of Presles to set down Maître Crottat, who, in obedience to the count's orders, was shown into the drawing-room to wait for him; there he found his clerk excessively crestfallen, in company with the two painters, all three conspicuously uncom-

fortable. Monsieur de Reybert, a man of fifty, with a very surly expression, had brought with him old Margueron and the notary from Beaumont, who held a bundle of leases and title-deeds.

When this assembled party saw the count appear in full court costume, Georges Marest had a spasm in the stomach and Joseph Bridau felt a qualm; but Mistigris, who was himself in his Sunday clothes, and who indeed had no crime on his conscience, said loud enough to be heard—

"Well, he looks much nicer now."

"You little rascal," said the count, drawing him toward him by one ear, "so we both deal in decorations! Do you recognize your work, my dear Schinner?" he went on, pointing to the ceiling.

"Monseigneur," said the artist, "I was so foolish as to assume so famous a name out of bravado; but to-day's experience makes it incumbent on me to do something good and win glory for that of Joseph Bridau."

"You took my part," said the count eagerly, "and I hope you will do me the pleasure of dining with me—you and your witty Mistigris."

"You do not know to what you are exposing yourself," said the audacious youngster; "an empty stomach knows no peers."

"Bridau," said the count, struck by a sudden reminiscence, "are you related to one of the greatest workers under the Empire, a brigadier in command who died a victim to his zeal?"

"I am his son, my lord," said Joseph, bowing.

"Then you are welcome here," replied the count, taking the artist's hand in both his own; "I knew your father, and you may depend on me as on—an American uncle," said Monsieur de Sérizy, smiling. "But you are too young to have a pupil—to whom does Mistigris belong?"

"To my friend Schinner, who has lent him to me," replied

Joseph. "Mistigris' name is Léon de Lora. My lord, if you remember my father, will you condescend to bear in mind his other son, who stands accused of conspiring against the State, and is on his trial before the Supreme Court——"

"To be sure," said the count. "I will bear it in mind, believe me. As to Prince Czerni-Georges, Ali Pasha's ally, and Mina's aide-de-camp——" said the count, turning to Georges.

"He?—my second clerk?" cried Crottat.

"You are under a mistake, Maître Crottat," said Monsieur de Sérizy, very severely. "A clerk who hopes ever to become a notary does not leave important documents in a diligence at the mercy of his fellow-travelers! A clerk who hopes to become a notary does not spend twenty francs between Paris and Moisselles! A clerk who hopes to become a notary does not expose himself to arrest as a deserter——"

"Monseigneur," said Georges Marest, "I may have amused myself by playing a practical joke on a party of travelers, but——"

"Do not interrupt his excellency," said his master, giving him a violent nudge in the ribs.

"A notary ought early to develop the gifts of discretion, prudence, and discernment, and not mistake a minister of State for a candlemaker."

"I accept sentence for my errors," said Georges; "but I did not leave my papers at the mercy——"

"You are at this moment committing the error of giving the lie to a minister of State, a peer of France, a gentleman, an old man—and a client. Look for your deed of sale."

The clerk turned over the papers in his portfolio.

"Do not make a mess of your papers," said the count, taking the document out of his pocket. "Here is the deed you are seeking."

Crottat turned it over three times, so much was he amazed at receiving it from the hands of his noble client.

"What, sir!" he at last began, addressing Georges.

"If I had not taken it," the count went on, "Père Léger —who is not such a fool as you fancy him from his questions as to agriculture, since they might have taught you that a man should always be thinking of his business—Père Léger might have gotten hold of it and discovered my plans. You also will give me the pleasure of your company at dinner, but on condition of telling us the history of the Moslem's execution at Smyrna, and of finishing the memoirs of some client which you read, no doubt, before publication."

"A trouncing for bouncing!" said Léon de Lora, in a low voice to Joseph Bridau.

"Gentlemen," said the count to the notary from Beaumont, to Crottat, Margueron, and Reybert, "come into the other room. We will not sit down to dinner till we have concluded our bargain; for, as my friend Mistigris says, we must know when to *creep* silent."

"Well, he is a thoroughly good fellow," said Léon de Lora to Georges Marest.

"Yes; but if he is a good fellow, my governor is not, and he will request me to play my tricks elsewhere."

"Well, you like traveling," said Bridau.

"What a dressing that boy will get from Monsieur and Madame Moreau!" cried Léon de Lora.

"The little idiot!" said Georges. "But for him the count would have thought it all very good fun. Well, well, it is a useful lesson, and if I am caught chattering in a coach again——"

"Oh, it is a stupid thing to do," said Joseph Bridau.

"And vulgar, too," said Mistigris. "Keep your tongue to clean your teeth."

While the business of the farm was being discussed between Monsieur Margueron and the Comte de Sérizy, with the assistance of the three notaries, and in the presence of Mons. de Reybert, Moreau was slowly making his way home. He went

in without looking about him, and sat down on a sofa in the drawing-room, while Oscar Husson crept into a corner out of sight, so terrified was he by the steward's white face.

"Well, my dear," said Estelle, coming in, fairly tired out by all she had had to do, "what is the matter?"

"My dear, we are ruined, lost beyond redemption. I am no longer land steward of Presles! The count has withdrawn his confidence."

"And what has caused——"

"Old Léger, who was in Pierrotin's chaise, let out all about the farm of les Moulineaux; but it is not that which has cut me off for ever from his favor——"

"What then?"

"Oscar spoke ill of the countess, and talked of monseigneur's ailments——"

"Oscar?" cried Madame Moreau. "You are punished by your own act! A pretty viper you have nursed in your bosom. How often have I told you——"

"That will do," said Moreau hoarsely.

At this instant Estelle and her husband detected Oscar huddled in a corner. Moreau pounced on the luckless boy like a kite on its prey, seized him by the collar of his olive-green coat, and forcibly dragged him into the daylight of a window.

"Speak! What did you say to monseigneur in the coach? What devil loosened your tongue, when you always stand moonstruck if I ask you a question? What did you do it for?" said the steward with terrific violence.

Oscar, too much scared for tears, kept silence, as motionless as a statue.

"Come and ask his excellency's pardon!" said Moreau.

"As if his excellency cared about a vermin like him!" shrieked Estelle in a fury.

"Come—come to the castle!" Moreau repeated.

Oscar collapsed, a lifeless heap on the floor.

"Will you come, I say?" said Moreau, his rage increasing every moment.

"No, no; have pity!" cried Oscar, who could not face a punishment worse than death.

Moreau took the boy by the collar and dragged him like a corpse across the courtyard, which rang with the boy's cries and sobs; he hauled him up the steps and flung him, howling and as rigid as a post, into the drawing-room at the feet of the count, who, having settled for the purchase of les Moulineaux, was just passing into the dining-room with his friends.

"On your knees, on your knees, wretched boy. Ask pardon of the man who has fed your mind by getting you a scholarship at college," cried Moreau.

Oscar lay with his face on the ground, foaming with rage. Everybody was startled. Moreau, quite beside himself, was purple in the face from the rush of blood to his head.

"This boy is mere vanity," said the count, after waiting in vain for Oscar's apology. "Pride can humble itself, for there is dignity in some self-humiliation. I am afraid you will never make anything of this fellow."

And the Minister passed on.

Moreau led Oscar away and back to his own house.

While the horses were being harnessed to the traveling chaise, he wrote the following letter to Madame Clapart:

"Oscar, my dear, has brought me to ruin. In the course of his journey in Pierrotin's chaise this morning he spoke of the flirtations of Madame la Comtesse to his excellency himself, who was traveling incognito, and told the count his own secrets as to the skin disease brought on by long nights of hard work in his various high offices. After dismissing me from my place, the count desired me not to allow Oscar to sleep at Presles, but to send him home. In obedience to his orders I am having my horses put to my wife's carriage, and Brochon, my groom, will take the little wretch to you.

"My wife and I are in a state of despair, which you may imagine, but which I cannot attempt to describe. I will come to see you in a few days, for I must make my plans. I have three children; I must think of the future, and I do not yet know what to decide on, for I am determined to show the count the value of seventeen years of the life of such a man as I. I have two hundred and sixty thousand francs, and I mean to acquire such a fortune as will allow me to be, some day, not much less than his excellency's equal. At this instant I feel that I could remove mountains and conquer insurmountable difficulties. What a lever is such a humiliating scene!——

"Whose blood can Oscar have in his veins? I cannot compliment you on your son; his behavior is that of an owl. At this moment of writing he has not yet uttered a word in reply to my questions and my wife's. Is he becoming idiotic, or is he idiotic already? My dear friend, did you not give him due injunctions before he started? How much misfortune you would have spared me by coming with him, as I begged you. If you were afraid of Estelle, you could have stayed at Moisselles. However, it is all over now. Farewell till we meet, soon.

"Your faithful friend and servant,

"MOREAU."

At eight o'clock that evening Madame Clapart had come in from a little walk with her husband, and sat knitting stockings for Oscar by the light of a single dip. Monsieur Clapart was expecting a friend named Poiret, who sometimes came in for a game of dominoes, for he never trusted himself to spend an evening in a café. In spite of temperance, enforced on him by his narrow means, Clapart could not have answered for his abstinence when in the midst of food and drink, and surrounded by other men, whose laughter might have nettled him.

"I am afraid Poiret may have been and gone," said he to his wife.

"The lodge-keeper would have told us, my dear," replied his wife.

"She may have forgotten."

"Why should she forget?"

"It would not be the first time she has forgotten things that concern us; God knows, anything is good enough for people who have no servants!"

"Well, well," said the poor woman, to change the subject and escape her husband's pin-stabs. "Oscar is at Presles by this time; he will be very happy in that beautiful place, that fine park——"

"Oh, yes, you expect great things!" retorted Clapart. "He will make hay there with a vengeance!"

"Will you never cease to be spiteful to that poor boy? What harm has he done you? Dear heaven! if ever we are in easy circumstances we shall owe it to him perhaps, for he has a good heart."

"Our bones will be gelatine long before that boy succeeds in the world!" said Clapart. "And he will have altered very considerably! Why, you don't know your own boy; he is a braggart, a liar, lazy, incapable——"

"Supposing you were to go to fetch Poiret," said the hapless mother, struck to the heart by the diatribe she had brought down on her own head.

"A boy who never took a prize at school!" added Clapart.

In the eyes of the commoner sort, bringing home prizes from school is positive proof of future success in life.

"Did you ever take a prize?" retorted his wife. "And Oscar got the fourth *accessit* (second-premium) in philosophy?"

This speech reduced Clapart to silence for a moment.

"And beside," he presently went on, "Madame Moreau must love him as she loves a nail—you know where; she will

try to set her husband against him. Oscar steward at Presles! Why, he must thoroughly understand land-surveying and agriculture——"

"He can learn."

"He! Never! I bet you that if he got a place there he would not be in it a week before he had done something clumsy, and was packed off by the Comte de Sérizy——"

"Good heavens! How can you be so vicious about the future prospects of a poor boy, full of good points, as sweet as an angel, and incapable of doing an ill turn to any living soul?"

At this moment the cracking of a post-boy's whip and the clatter of a chaise at top speed, with the hoofs of horses pulled up sharply at the outer gate, had roused the whole street. Clapart, hearing every window flung open, went out on the landing.

"Oscar, sent back by post!" cried he in a tone in which his satisfaction gave way to genuine alarm.

"Good God! what can have happened?" said the poor mother, trembling as a leaf is shaken by an autumn wind.

Brochon came upstairs, followed by Oscar and Poiret.

"Good heavens, what has happened?" repeated she, appealing to the groom.

"I don't know, but Monsieur Moreau is no longer steward of Presles, and they say it is your son's doing, and monseigneur has ordered him home again. However, here is a letter from poor Monsieur Moreau, who is so altered, madame, it is dreadful to see."

"Clapart, a glass of wine for the post-boy and one for monsieur," said his wife, who dropped into an armchair and read the terrible letter. "Oscar," she went on, dragging herself to her bed, "you want to kill your mother! After all I said to you this morning——" But Madame Clapart did not finish her sentence; she fainted with misery.

Oscar remained standing, speechless. Madame Clapart, as

she recovered her senses, heard her husband saying to the boy as he shook him by the arm—

"Will you speak?"

"Go to bed at once, sir," said she to her son. "And leave him in peace, Monsieur Clapart; do not drive him out of his wits, for he is dreadfully altered!"

Oscar did not hear his mother's remark; he had made for bed the instant he was told.

Those who have any recollection of their own boyhood will not be surprised to hear that, after a day or so full of events and agitations, Oscar slept the sleep of the just in spite of the enormity of his sins. Nay, next day he did not find the whole face of nature so much changed as he expected, and was astonished to find that he was hungry, after regarding himself the day before as unworthy to live. He had suffered only in mind, and at that age mental impressions succeed each other so rapidly that each wipes out the last, however deep it may have seemed.

Hence corporal punishment, though philanthropists have made a strong stand against it of late years, is in some cases necessary for children; also, it is perfectly natural, for Nature herself has no other means but the infliction of pain to produce a lasting impression of her lessons. If to give weight to the shame, unhappily too transient, which had overwhelmed Oscar, the steward had given him a sound thrashing, the lesson might have been effectual. The discernment needed for the proper infliction of such corrections is the chief argument against their use; for Nature never makes a mistake, while the teacher must often blunder.

Madame Clapart took care to send her husband out next morning to have her son to herself. She was in a pitiable condition. Her eyes red with weeping, her face worn by a sleepless night, her voice broken; everything in her seemed to sue for mercy by the signs of such grief as she could not have endured a second time. When Oscar entered the room,

she beckoned to him to sit down by her, and in a mild but feeling voice reminded him of all the kindness done them by the steward of Presles. She explained to Oscar that for the last six years especially she had lived on Moreau's ingenious charity. Monsieur Clapart's appointment, which they owed, no less than Oscar's scholarship, to the Comte de Sérizy, he would some day cease to hold. Clapart could not claim a pension, not having served long enough either in the Treasury or the city to ask for one. And when Monsieur Clapart should be shelved, what was to become of them?

"I," she said, "by becoming a sick-nurse or taking a place as housekeeper in some gentleman's house, could make my living and keep Monsieur Clapart; but what would become of you? You have no fortune, and you must work for your living. There are but four openings for lads like you—trade, the civil service, the liberal professions, and military service. A young man who has no capital must contribute faithful service and brains; but great discretion is needed in business, and your behavior yesterday makes your success very doubtful. For an official career you have to begin, for years perhaps, as a supernumerary, and need interest to back you; and you have alienated the only protector we ever had—a man high in power. And, beside, even if you were blest with the exceptional gifts which enable a young man to rise rapidly, either in business or in an official position, where are we to find the money for food and clothing while you are learning your work?"

And here his mother, like all women, went off into wordy lamentations. What could she do now that she was deprived of the gifts of produce which Moreau was able to send her while managing Presles? Oscar had overthrown his best friend.

Next to trade and office work, of which her son need not even think, came the legal profession as a notary, a pleader, an attorney, or a sheriff. But then he must study law for

three years at least, and pay heavy fees for his admission, his examinations, his *theses*, and diploma; the number of competitors was so great that superior talent was indispensable, and how was he to live? That was the constantly recurring question.

"Oscar," she said in conclusion, "all my pride, all my life were centred in you. I could bear to look forward to an old age of poverty, for I kept my eyes on you; I saw you entering on a prosperous career, and succeeding in it. That hope has given me courage to endure the privations I have gone through during the last six years to keep you at school, for it has cost seven or eight hundred francs a year beside the half-scholarship. Now that my hopes are crushed, I dread to think of your future fate. I must not spend a sou of Monsieur Clapart's salary on my own son.

"What do you propose to do? You are not a good enough mathematician to pass into a specialist college; and, beside, where could I find the three thousand francs a year for your training? This is life, my dear child! Well, you are eighteen, and a strong lad—enlist as a soldier; it is the only way you can make a living."

Oscar as yet knew nothing of life. Like all boys who have been brought up in ignorance of the poverty at home, he had no idea of the need to work for his living; the word *trade* conveyed no idea to his mind; and the words *Government office* did not mean much, for he knew nothing of the work. He listened with a look of submission, which he tried to make penitential, but his mother's remonstrances were lost in air. However, at the idea of being a soldier, and on seeing the tears in his mother's eyes, the boy, too, was ready to weep. As soon as Madame Clapart saw the drops on her boy's cheeks, she was quite disarmed; and, like all mothers in a similar position, she fell back on the generalities which wind up this sort of attack, in which they suffer all their own sorrows and their children's at the same time.

"Come, Oscar, promise me to be more cautious for the future, not to blurt out whatever comes uppermost, to moderate your absurd conceit——" and so on.

Oscar was ready to promise all his mother asked, and, pressing him gently to her heart, Madame Clapart ended by embracing him to comfort him for the scolding he had had.

"Now," said she, "you will listen to your mother and follow her advice, for a mother can give her son none but good advice. We will go and see your Uncle Cardot. He is our last hope. Cardot owed a great deal to your father, who, by allowing him to marry his sister, with what was then an immense marriage portion, enabled him to make a large fortune in silk. I fancy he would place you with Monsieur Camusot, his son-in-law and successor, in the Rue des Bourdonnais.

"Still, your Uncle Cardot has four children of his own. He made over his store, the Cocon d'Or (Golden Cocoon), to his eldest daughter, Madame Camusot. Though Camusot has millions, there are the four children, by two wives, and he hardly knows of our existence. Marianne, his second girl, married Monsieur Protez, of Protez and Chiffreville. He paid four hundred thousand francs to put his eldest son in business as a notary; and he has just invested for his second son Joseph as a partner in the business of Matifat, drug importers. Thus your Uncle Cardot may very well not choose to be troubled about you, whom he sees but four times a year. He has never been to call on me here; but he could come to see me when I was in *Madame Mère's* household, to be allowed to supply silks to their Imperial highnesses, and the Emperor, and the grandees at Court. And now the Camusots are *Ultras!* Camusot's eldest son, by his first wife, married the daughter of a gentleman usher to the King! Well, when the world stoops it grows hunchbacked. And, after all, it is a good business; the Cocon d'Or has the custom of the Court under the Bourbons as it had under the Emperor.

"To-morrow we will go to see your Uncle Cardot, and I hope you will contrive to behave; for, as I tell you, in him is our last hope."

Monsieur Jean-Jérôme-Séverin Cardot had lost his second wife six years since—Mademoiselle Husson—on whom, in the days of his glory, the contractor had bestowed a marriage portion of a hundred thousand francs in hard cash. Cardot, the head-clerk of the Cocon d'Or, one of the old-established Paris houses, had bought the business in 1793 when its owners were ruined by the *maximum*, and Mademoiselle Husson's money to back him had enabled him to make an almost colossal fortune in ten years. To provide handsomely for his children, he had very ingeniously invested three hundred thousand francs in annuities for himself and his wife, which brought him in thirty thousand francs a year. The rest of his capital he divided into three portions of four hundred thousand francs for his younger children, and the store was taken as representing that sum by Camusot when he married the eldest girl. Thus the old fellow, now nearly seventy, could dispose of his thirty thousand francs a year without damaging his children's interests; they were all well married, and no avaricious hopes could interfere with their filial affection.

Uncle Cardot lived at Belleville in one of the first houses just above la Courtille. He rented a second floor, whence there was a fine view over the Seine valley, an apartment for which he paid a thousand francs a year, facing south, with the exclusive enjoyment of a large garden; thus he never troubled himself about the three or four other families inhabiting the spacious country house. Secure, by a long lease, of ending his days there, he lived rather shabbily, waited on by his old cook and by a maid who had been attached to his late wife, both of whom looked forward to an annuity of some six hundred francs at his death, and consequently did not rob him.

These two women took incredible care of their master, and with all the more devotion since no one could be less fractious or fidgety than he.

The rooms, furnished by the late Madame Cardot, had remained unaltered for six years, and the old man was quite content; he did not spend a thousand crowns a year there, for he dined out in Paris five days a week, and came home at midnight in a private fly that he took at the Barrière de la Courtille. They had hardly anything to do beyond providing him with breakfast. The old man breakfasted at eleven o'clock, then he dressed and scented himself and went to Paris. A man usually gives notice when he means to dine out; Monsieur Cardot gave notice when he was to dine at home.

This little old gentleman, plump, rosy, square, and hearty, was always as neat as a pin, as the saying goes; that is to say, always in black silk stockings, corded silk knee-breeches, a white marcella vest, dazzlingly white linen, and a dark blue coat; he wore violet silk gloves, gold buckles to his shoes and breeches, a touch of powder on his hair, and a small queue tied with black ribbon. His face was noticeable for the thick, bushy eyebrows, beneath which sparkled his gray eyes, and a large squarely-cut nose that made him look like some venerable prebendary. This countenance did not belie the man. Old Cardot was, in fact, one of the race of frisky "Gérontes" who are disappearing day by day, and who played the part of Turcaret in all the romances and comedies of the eighteenth century. Uncle Cardot would speak to a woman as "Lady fair;" he would take home any woman in a coach who had no other protector; he was "theirs to command," to use his own expression, with a chivalrous flourish. His calm face and snowy hair were the adjuncts of an old age wholly devoted to pleasure. Among men he boldly professed Epicureanism, and allowed himself rather a broad style of jokes. He had made no objection when his son-in-law Camu-

sot attached himself to Coralie, the fascinating actress, for he was, in secret, the Mæcenas of Mademoiselle Florentine,* leading dancer at the Gaîté theatre.

Still, nothing appeared on the surface, or in his evident conduct, to tell tales of these opinions and this mode of life. Uncle Cardot, grave and polite, was supposed to be almost cold, such a display did he make of the proprieties, and even a bigot would have called him a hypocrite. This worthy gentleman particularly detested the priesthood, he was one of the large body of silly people who subscribe to the "Constitutionnel," and was much exercised about the refusal of rights of burial. He adored Voltaire, though his preference as a matter of taste was for Piron, Verdé, and Collé. Of course, he admired Béranger, of whom he spoke ingeniously as the "high-priest of the religion of Lisette." His daughters, Madame Camusot and Madame Protez, and his two sons would indeed have been knocked flat, to use a vulgar phrase, if any one had told them what their father meant by singing "La Mère Godichon."

The shrewd old man had never told his children of his annuity; and they, seeing him live so poorly, all believed that he had stripped himself of his fortune for them, and overwhelmed him with care and affection. And he would sometimes say to his sons: "Do not lose your money, for I have none to leave you." Camusot, who was a man after his own heart, and whom he liked well enough to allow him to join his little parties, was the only one who knew of his annuity of thirty thousand francs. Camusot highly applauded the old fellow's philosophy, thinking that after providing so liberally for his children and doing his duty so thoroughly, he had a right to end his days jovially.

"You see, my dear fellow," the old master of the Cocon d'Or would say to his son-in-law, "I might have married again, no doubt, and a young wife would have had children.

* See "A Provincial at Paris."

Oh, yes, I should have had children, I was at an age when men always have children. Well, Florentine does not cost me so much as a wife, she never bores me, she will not plague me with children, and will not make a hole in your fortune." And Camusot discovered in old Cardot an admirable feeling for the Family, regarding him as a perfect father-in-law. "He succeeds," he would say, "in reconciling the interests of his children with the pleasures it is natural to indulge in in old age after having gone through all the anxieties of business."

Neither the Cardots, nor the Camusots, nor the Protez suspected what the existence was of their old aunt, Madame Clapart. The communications had always been restricted to sending formal letters on the occasions of a death or a marriage, and visiting cards on New Year's Day. Madame Clapart was too proud to sacrifice her feelings for anything but her Oscar's interests, and acted under the influence of her regard for Moreau, the only person who had remained faithful to her in misfortune. She had never wearied old Cardot by her presence or her importunities, but she had clung to him as to a hope. She called on him once a quarter, and talked to him of Oscar Husson, the nephew of the late respected Madame Cardot, taking the lad to see Uncle Cardot three times a year, in the holidays. On each occasion the old man took Oscar to dine at the Cadran bleu (the Blue Dial), and to the Gaîté in the evening, taking him home afterward to the Rue de la Cerisaie. On one occasion, after giving him a new suit of clothes, he had made him a present of the silver mug and spoon and fork required as part of every boarding-school boy's equipment.

Oscar's mother had tried to convince the old man that Oscar was very fond of him, and she was always talking of the silver mug and spoon and the beautiful suit, of which nothing now survived but the vest. But these little insinuating attentions did Oscar more harm than good with so cunning an old fox as Uncle Cardot. Old Cardot had not been devoted to

his late lamented, a bony red-haired woman; also he knew the circumstances of the deceased Husson's marriage to Oscar's mother; and without looking down on her in any way, he knew that Oscar had been born after his father's death, so his poor nephew seemed an absolute alien to the Cardot family. Unable to foresee disaster, Oscar's mother had not made up for this lack of natural ties between the boy and his uncle, and had not succeeded in implanting in the old merchant any liking for her boy in his earliest youth. Like all women who are absorbed in the one idea of motherhood, Madame Clapart could not put herself in Uncle Cardot's place; she thought he ought to be deeply interested in such a charming boy, whose name, too, was that of the late Madame Cardot.

"Monsieur, here is the mother of your nephew Oscar," said the maid to Monsieur Cardot, who was airing himself in the garden before breakfast, after being shaved and having his head dressed by the barber.

"Good-morning, lady fair," said the old silk-merchant, bowing to Madame Clapart, while he wrapped his white quilted dressing-gown across him. "Ah, ha! your youngster is growing apace," he added, pulling Oscar by the ear.

"He has finished his schooling, and he was very sorry that his dear uncle was not present at the distribution of prizes at the Collége Henri IV., for he was named. The name of Husson, of which, let us hope, he may prove worthy, was honorably mentioned."

"The deuce it was!" said the little man, stopping short. He was walking with Madame Clapart and Oscar on a terrace where there were orange-trees, myrtles, and pomegranate shrubs. "And what did he get?"

"The fourth *accessit** in philosophy," said the mother triumphantly.

"Oh, ho. He has some way to go yet to make up for lost time," cried Uncle Cardot. "To end with an *accessit*—is

* Second best premium.

not the treasure of Peru. You will breakfast with me?" said he.

"We are at your commands," replied Madame Clapart. "Oh, my dear Monsieur Cardot, what a comfort it is to a father and mother when their children make a good start in life. From that point of view, as indeed from every other," she put in, correcting herself, "you are one of the happiest fathers I know. In the hands of your admirable son-in-law and your amiable daughter, the Cocon d'Or is still the best store of the kind in Paris. Your eldest son has been for years as a notary at the head of the best-known business in Paris, and he married a rich woman. Your youngest is a partner in a first-rate druggist's business. And you have the sweetest grandchildren. You are the head of four flourishing familes. Oscar, leave us; go and walk round the garden, and do not touch the flowers."

"Why, he is eighteen!" exclaimed Uncle Cardot, smiling at this injunction, as though Oscar was a child!

"Alas! indeed he is, my dear Monsieur Cardot; and after bringing him up to that age neither crooked nor bandy, sound in mind and body, after sacrificing everything to give him an education, it would be hard indeed not to see him start on the way to fortune."

"Well, Monsieur Moreau, who got you his half-scholarship at the Collége Henri IV., will start him in the right road," said Uncle Cardot, hiding his hypocrisy under an affectation of bluntness.

"Monsieur Moreau may die," said she. "Beside, he has quarreled beyond remedy with Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy, his patron."

"The deuce he has! Listen, madame, I see what you are coming to——"

"No, monsieur," said Oscar's mother, cutting the old man short; while he, out of respect for a "lady fair," controlled the impulse of annoyance at being interrupted. "Alas! you

can know nothing of the anguish of a mother who for seven years has been obliged to take six hundred francs a year out of her husband's salary of eighteen hundred. Yes, monsieur, that is our whole income. So what can I do for my Oscar? Monsieur Clapart so intensely hates the poor boy that I really cannot keep him at home. What can a poor woman do under such circumstances but come to consult the only relative her boy has under heaven!"

"You did quite right," replied Monsieur Cardot, "you never said anything of all this before——"

"Indeed, monsieur," replied Madame Clapart with pride, "you are the last person to whom I would confess the depth of my poverty. It is all my own fault; I married a man whose incapacity is beyond belief. Oh! I am a most miserable woman."

"Listen, madame," said the little old man gravely. "Do not cry. I cannot tell you how much it pains me to see a fair lady in tears. After all, your boy's name is Husson; and if the dear departed were alive, she would do something for the sake of her father's and brother's name——"

"She truly loved her brother!" cried Oscar's mother.

"But all my fortune is divided among my children, who have nothing further to expect from me," the old man went on. "I divided the two million francs I had among them; I wished to see them happy in my lifetime. I kept nothing for myself but an annuity, and at my time of life a man clings to his habits. Do you know what you must do with this youngster?" said he, calling back Oscar and taking him by the arm. "Put him to study law, I will pay for his matriculation and preliminary fees. Place him with an attorney; let him learn all the tricks of the trade; if he does well, and gets on and likes the work, and if I am still alive, each of my children will, when the time comes, lend him a quarter of the sum necessary to purchase a connection; I will stand surety for him. From now till then you have only to feed and

clothe him; he will know some hard times no doubt, but he will learn what life is. Why, why! I set out from Lyons with two double louis given me by my grandmother; I came to Paris on foot—and here I am! Short commons are good for the health. Young man, with discretion, honesty, and hard work, success is certain. It is a great pleasure to make your own fortune; and when a man has kept his teeth, he eats what he likes in his old age, singing 'La Mère Godichon' every now and then, as I do. Mark my words: Honesty, hard work, and discretion."

"You hear, Oscar," said his mother. "Your uncle has put in four words the sum-total of all my teaching, and you ought to stamp the last on your mind in letters of fire."

"Oh, it is there!" replied Oscar.

"Well, then, thank your uncle; do you not understand that he is providing for you in the future? You may be an attorney in Paris."

"He does not appreciate the splendor of his destiny," said the old man, seeing Oscar's bewildered face. "He has but just left school. Listen to me: I am not given to wasting words," his uncle went on. "Remember that at your age honesty is only secured by resisting temptations, and in a great city like Paris you meet them at every turn. Live in a garret under your mother's roof; go straight to your lecture, and from that to your office; work away morning, noon, and night, and study at home; be a second clerk by the time you are two-and-twenty, and a head-clerk at four-and-twenty. Get learning, and you are a made man. And then if you should not like that line of work, you might go into my son's office as a notary and succeed him. So work, patience, honesty, and discretion—these are your watchwords."

"And God grant you may live another thirty years to see your fifth child realize all our expectations!" cried Madame Clapart, taking the old man's hand and pressing it with a dignity worthy of her young days.

"Come, breakfast," said the kind old man, leading Oscar in by the ear.

During the meal Uncle Cardot watched his nephew on the sly, and soon discovered that he knew nothing of life.

"Send him to see me now and then," said he, as he took leave of her, with a nod to indicate Oscar. "I will lick him into shape."

This visit soothed the poor woman's worst grief, for she had not looked for such a happy result. For a fortnight she took Oscar out walking, watched over him almost tyrannically, and thus time went on till the end of October.

One morning Oscar saw the terrible steward walk in to find the wretched party in the Rue de la Cerisaie breakfasting off a salad of herring and lettuce, with a cup of milk to wash it down.

"We have settled in Paris, but we do not live as we did at Presles," said Moreau, who intended thus to make Madame Clapart aware of the change in their circumstances, brought about by Oscar's misdemeanor. "But I shall not often be in town. I have gone into partnership with old Léger and old Margueron of Beaumont. We are land agents, and we began by buying the estate of Persan. I am the head of the firm, which has altogether a million of francs, for I have borrowed on my property. When I find an opening, Père Léger and I go into the matter, and my partners each take a quarter and I half of the profits, for I have all the trouble; I shall always be on the road.

"My wife lives in Paris very quietly, in the Faubourg du Roule. When we have fairly started in business, and shall only be risking the interest on our money, if we are satisfied with Oscar, we may, perhaps, give him work."

"Well, after all, my friend, my unlucky boy's blunder will no doubt turn out to be the cause of your making a fine fortune, for you really were wasting your talents and energy

at Presles." Madame Clapart then told the story of her visit to Uncle Cardot, to show Moreau that she and her son might be no further expense to him.

"The old man is quite right," said the ex-steward. "Oscar must be kept to his work with a hand of iron, and he will no doubt make a notary or an attorney. But he must not wander from the line traced out for him. Ah! I know the man you want. The custom of an estate agent is valuable. I have been told of an attorney who has bought a practice without any connection. He is a young man, but as stiff as an iron bar, a tremendous worker, a perfect horse for energy and go; his name is Desroches. I will offer him all our business on condition of his taking Oscar in hand. I will offer him a premium of nine hundred francs, of which I will pay three hundred; thus your son will cost you only six hundred, and I will recommend him strongly to his master. If the boy is ever to become a man, it will be under that iron rule, for he will come out a notary, a pleader, or an attorney."

"Come, Oscar, thank Monsieur Moreau for his kindness; you stand there like a mummy. It is not every youth who blunders that is lucky enough to find friends to take an interest in him after being injured by him——"

"The best way to make matters up with me," said Moreau, taking Oscar's hand, "is to work steadily and behave well."

Ten days after this Oscar was introduced by Monsieur Moreau to Maître Desroches, attorney, lately established in the Rue de Béthisy, in spacious rooms at the end of a narrow court, at a relatively low rent. Desroches, a young man of six-and-twenty, the son of poor parents, austerely brought up by an excessively severe father, had himself known what it was to be in Oscar's position; he therefore took an interest in him, but only in the way of which he was himself capable, with all the hardness of his character. The manner of this tall, lean young lawyer, with a dull complexion, and his hair cut short

all over his head, sharp in his speech, keen-eyed, and gloomy though hasty, terrified poor Oscar.

"We work day and night here," said the lawyer from the depths of his chair, and from behind a long table, on which papers were piled in alps. "Monsieur Moreau, we will not kill him, but he will have to go our pace. Monsieur Godeschal!" he called out.

Although it was Sunday, the head-clerk appeared with a pen in his hand.

"Monsieur Godeschal, this is the articled pupil of whom I spoke, and in whom Monsieur Moreau takes the greatest interest; he will dine with us, and sleep in the little attic next to your room. You must allow him exactly time enough to get to the law-schools and back, so that he has not five minutes to lose; see that he learns the Code, and does well at lecture; that is to say, give him law books to read up when he has done his school work. In short, he is to be under your immediate direction, and I will keep an eye on him. We want to turn him out what you are yourself—a capital head-clerk—by the time he is ready to be sworn in as an attorney. Go with Godeschal, my little friend; he will show you your room, and you can move into it."

"You see, Godeschal?" Desroches went on, addressing Moreau. "He is a youngster without a sou, like myself; he is Mariette's brother, and she is saving for him, so that he may buy a connection ten years hence. All my clerks are youngsters, who have nothing to depend on but their ten fingers to make their fortune. And my five clerks and I work like any dozen of other men. In ten years I shall have the finest practice in Paris. We take a passionate interest here in our business and our clients, and that is beginning to be known. I got Godeschal from my greater brother in the law, Derville; with him he was second clerk, though only for a fortnight; but we had made friends in that huge office.

"I give Godeschal a thousand francs a year, with board and

lodging. The fellow is worth it to me; he is indefatigable! I like that boy! He managed to live on six hundred francs a year, as I did when I was a clerk. What I absolutely insist on is stainless honesty, and the man who can practice it in poverty *is* a man. The slightest failing on that score, and a clerk of mine goes!"

"Come, the boy is in a good school," said Moreau.

For two whole years Oscar lived in the Rue de Béthisy, in a den of the law; for if ever this old-fashioned term could be applied to a lawyer's office, it was to this of Desroches. Under this minute and strict supervision, he was kept so rigidly to hours and to work that his life in the heart of Paris was like that of a monk.

At five in the morning, in all weathers, Godeschal woke. He went down to the office with Oscar, to save a fire, and they always found the "chief" up and at work. Oscar did the errands and prepared his school-work—studies on an enormous scale. Godeschal, and often the chief himself, showed their pupil what authors to compare, and the difficulties to be met. Oscar was never allowed to pass from one chapter of the Code to the next till he had thoroughly mastered it, and had satisfied both Desroches and Godeschal, who put him through preliminary examinations, far longer and harder than those of the law-schools.

On his return from the schools, where he did not spend much time, he resumed his seat in the office and worked again; sometimes he went into the Courts, and he was at the bidding of the merciless Godeschal till dinner-time. Dinner, which he shared with his masters, consisted of a large dish of meat, a dish of vegetables, and a salad; for dessert there was a bit of Gruyère cheese. After dinner, Godeschal and Oscar went back to the office and worked there till the evening.

Once a month Oscar went to breakfast with his Uncle Cardot, and he spent the Sundays with his mother. Moreau from

time to time, if he came to the office on business, would take the boy to dine at the Palais-Royal and treat him to the play. Oscar had been so thoroughly snubbed by Godeschal and Desroches on the subject of his craving after fashion that he had ceased to think about dress.

"A good clerk," said Godeschal, "should have two black coats—one old and one new—black trousers, black stockings and shoes. Boots cost too much. You may have boots when you are an attorney. A clerk ought not to spend more than seven hundred francs in all. He should wear good, strong shirts of stout linen. Oh, when you start from zero to make a fortune, you must know how to limit yourself to what is strictly needful. Look at Monsieur Desroches! He did as we are doing, and you see he has succeeded."

Godeschal practiced what he preached. Professing the strictest principles of honor, reticence, and honesty, he acted on them without any display, as simply as he walked and breathed. It was the natural working of his soul, as walking and breathing are the working of certain organs.

Eighteen months after Oscar's arrival, the second clerk had made, for the second time, a small mistake in the accounts of his little cash-box. Godeschal addressed him in the presence of all the clerks—

"My dear Gaudet, leave on your own account, that it may not be said that the chief turned you out. You are either inaccurate or careless, and neither of those faults is of any use here. The chief shall not know, and that is the best I can do for an old fellow-clerk."

Thus, at the age of twenty, Oscar was third clerk in Maître Desroches' office. Though he earned no salary, yet he was fed and lodged, for he did the work of a second clerk. Desroches employed two managing clerks, and the second clerk was overdone with work. By the time he had got through his second year at the schools, Oscar, who knew more than many a man who has taken out his license, did the work of the

Courts very intelligently, and occasionally pleaded in chambers. In fact, Desroches and Godeschal expressed themselves satisfied.

Still, though he had become almost sensible, he betrayed a love of pleasure and a desire to shine, which were only subdued by the stern discipline and incessant toil of the life he led. The estate agent, satisfied with the boy's progress, then relaxed his strictness; and when, in the month of July, 1825, Oscar passed his final examination, Moreau gave him enough money to buy some good clothes. Madame Clapart, very happy and proud of her son, prepared a magnificent outfit for the qualified attorney, the second clerk, as he was soon to be. In poor families a gift always takes the form of something useful.

When the Courts reopened in the month of November, Oscar took the second clerk's room and his place, with a salary of eight hundred francs, board and lodging. And Uncle Cardot, who came privately to make inquiries about his nephew of Desroches, promised Madame Clapart that he would put Oscar in a position to buy a connection if he went on as he had begun.

In spite of such seeming wisdom, Oscar Husson was torn by many yearnings in the bottom of his soul. Sometimes he felt as if he must fly from a life so entirely opposed to his taste and character; a galley slave, he thought, was happier than he. Galled by his iron collar, he was sometimes tempted to run away when he compared himself with some well-dressed youth he met in the street. Now and then an impulse of folly with regard to women would surge up in him; and his resignation was only a part of his disgust of life. Kept steady by Godeschal's example, he was dragged rather than led by his will to follow so thorny a path.

Godeschal, who watched Oscar, made it his rule not to put his ward in the way of temptation. The boy had usually no money, or so little that he could not run into excesses. Dur-

ing the last year the worthy Godeschal had five or six times taken Oscar out for some "lark," paying the cost, for he perceived that the cord round this tethered kid's neck must be loosened; and these excesses, as the austere head-clerk termed them, helped Oscar to endure life. He found little to amuse him at his uncle's house, and still less at his mother's, for she lived even more frugally than Desroches.

Moreau could not, like Godeschal, make himself familiar with Oscar, and it is probable that this true protector made Godeschal his deputy in initiating the poor boy into the many mysteries of life. Oscar, thus learning discretion, could at last appreciate the enormity of the blunder he had committed during his ill-starred journey in the *coucou;* still, as the greater part of his fancies were so far suppressed, the follies of youth might yet lead him astray. However, as by degrees he acquired knowledge of the world and its ways, his reason developed; and so long as Godeschal did not lose sight of him, Moreau hoped to train Madame Clapart's son to a good end.

"How is he going on?" the estate agent asked on his return from a journey which had kept him away from Paris for some months.

"Still much too vain," replied Godeschal. "You give him good clothes and fine linen, he wears shirt-frills like a stockbroker, and my gentleman goes to walk in the Tuileries on Sundays in search of adventures. What can I say? He is young. He teases me to introduce him to my sister, in whose house he would meet a famous crew!—actresses, dancers, dandies, men who are eating themselves out of house and home. He is not cut out for an attorney, I fear. Still, he does not speak badly; he might become a pleader. He could argue a case from a well-prepared brief."

In November, 1825, when Oscar Husson was made second clerk, and was preparing his *thesis* for taking out his license,

a new fourth clerk came to Desroches' office to fill up the gap made by Oscar's promotion.

This fourth clerk, whose name was Frédéric Marest, was intended for the higher walks of the law, and was now ending his third year at the schools. From information received by the inquiring minds of the office, he was a handsome fellow of three-and-twenty, who had inherited about twelve thousand francs a year at the death of a bachelor uncle, and the son of a Madame Marest, the widow of a rich lumber merchant. The future judge, filled with the laudable desire to know his business in its minutest details, placed himself under Desroches, intending to study procedure, so as to be fit to take the place of a managing clerk in two years' time. His purpose was to go through his first stages as a pleader in Paris, so as to be fully prepared for an appointment, which, as a young man of wealth, he would certainly get. To see himself a public prosecutor, at the age of thirty, was the height of his ambition.

Though Frédéric Marest was the first cousin of Georges Marest, the practical joker of the journey to Presles, as young Husson knew this youth only by his first name, as Georges, the name of Frédéric Marest had no suggestions for him.

"Gentlemen," said Godeschal at breakfast, addressing all his underlings, "I have to announce the advent of a new student in law; and as he is very rich, we shall, I hope, make him pay his footing handsomely."

"Bring out the Book," cried Oscar to the youngest clerk, "and let us be serious, pray."

The boy clambered like a squirrel along the pigeon-holes to reach a volume lying on the top shelf, so as to collect all the dust.

"It is finely colored!" said the lad, holding it up.

We must now explain the perennial pleasantry which at that time gave rise to the existence of such a book in almost every lawyer's office. An old saying of the eighteenth cen-

tury—"Clerks only breakfast, farmers generally dine, and lords sup"—is still true, as regards the faculty of law, of every man who has spent two or three years studying procedure under an attorney, or the technicalities of a notary's business under some master of that branch. In the life of a lawyer's clerk work is so unremitting that pleasure is enjoyed all the more keenly for its rarity, and a practical joke especially is relished with rapture. This, indeed, is what explains up to a certain point Georges Marest's behavior in Pierrotin's chaise. The gloomiest of law-clerks is always a prey to the craving for farcical buffoonery. The instinct with which a practical joke or an occasion for fooling is jumped at and utilized among law-clerks is marvelous to behold, and is found in no other class but among artists. The studio and the lawyer's office are, in this respect, better than the stage.

Desroches, having started in an office without a connection, had, as it were, founded a new dynasty. This "Restoration" had interrupted the traditions of the office with regard to the footing of a new-comer. Desroches, indeed, settling in quarters where stamped paper had never yet been seen, had put in new tables and clean new file-boxes of white mill-board edged with blue. His staff consisted of clerks who had come from other offices with no connection between them, and thrown together by surprise, as it were.

But Godeschal, who had learned his fence under Derville, was not the man to allow the precious tradition of the *Bienvenue* to be lost. The *Bienvenue*, or welcome, is the breakfast which every new pupil must give to the "old boys" of the office to which he is articled. Now, just at the time when Oscar joined the office, in the first six months of Desroches' career, one winter afternoon when work was through much earlier than usual, and the clerks were warming themselves before going home, Godeschal hit upon the notion of concocting a sham register of the *fasti* and High Festivals of the Minions of the Law, a relic of great antiquity, saved from the

storms of the Revolution, and handed down from the office of the great Bordin, Attorney to the Châtelet, and the immediate predecessor of Sauvagnest, the attorney from whom Desroches had taken the office. The first thing was to find in some stationer's old stock a ledger with paper bearing an eighteenth-century watermark, and properly bound in parchment, in which to enter the decrees of the Council. Having discovered such a volume, it was tossed in the dust, in the ashes-pan, in the fireplace, in the kitchen; it was even left in what the clerks called the deliberating-room; and it had acquired a tint of mildew that would have enchanted a bookworm, the cracks of primeval antiquity, and corners so worn that the mice might have nibbled them off. The edges were rubbed with infinite skill. The book being thus perfected, here are a few passages which will explain to the dullest the uses to which Desroches' clerks devoted it, the first sixty pages being filled with sham reports of cases.

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. So be it.

"Whereas, on this day the Festival of our Lady Saint-Geneviève, patron saint of this good city of Paris, under whose protection the scribes and scriveners of this office have dwelt since the year of our Lord, 1525, we, the undersigned clerks and scriveners of this office of Master Jerosme-Sebastien Bordin, successor here to the deceased Guerbet, who in his lifetime served as attorney to the Châtelet, have recognized the need for us to replace the register and archives of installations of clerks in this glorious office, being ourselves distinguished members of the Faculty of the Law, which former register is now filled with the roll and record of our well-beloved predecessors, and we have besought the keeper of the Palace archives to bestow it with those of other offices, and we have all attended high mass in the parish church of Saint-Séverin to solemnize the opening of this our new register.

"In token whereof, we here sign and affix our names.

"MALIN, Head-Clerk.
"GREVIN, Second Clerk.
"ATHANASE FERET, Clerk.
"JACQUES HUET, Clerk.
"REGNALD DE SAINT-JEAN-D'ANGELY, Clerk.
"BEDEAU, Office Boy and Gutter-jumper.

"In the year of our Lord, 1787.

"Having attended mass, we went in a body to la Courtille, and had a great breakfast, which lasted until seven of the next morning."

This was a miracle of caligraphy. An expert could have sworn that the writing dated from the eighteenth century. Then follow twenty-seven reports in full of "Welcome" breakfasts, the last dating from the fatal year of 1792.

After a gap of fourteen years, the register reopened in 1806 with the appointment of Bordin to be attorney to the lower Court of the Seine. And this was the record of the re-constitution of the Kingdom of Basoche (the legal profession generally):

"God in His clemency has granted that in the midst of the storms which have devastated France, now a great Empire, the precious archives of the most illustrious office of Master Bordin should be preserved. And we, the undersigned clerks of the most honorable and most worshipful Master Bordin, do not hesitate to ascribe this their marvelous escape, when so many other title-deeds, charters, and letters-patent have vanished, to the protection of Saint-Geneviève, the patron saint of this office, as likewise to the reverence paid by the last of the attorneys of the old stock to all ancient use and custom. And whereas we know not what share to ascribe to the Lady Saint-Geneviève and what to Master Bordin in the working of

this miracle, we have resolved to go to the Church of Saint Étienne-du-Mont, there to attend a mass to be said at the altar of that saintly shepherdess who sendeth us so many lambs to fleece, and to invite our chief and master to breakfast, in the hope that he may bear the charges thereof. And to this we set our hand.

"OIGNARD, Head-Clerk.
"POIDEVIN, Second Clerk.
"PROUST, Clerk.
"BRIGNOLET, Clerk.
"DERVILLE, Clerk.
"AUGUSTEN CORET, Office Boy.

"At the office, this 10th day of November, 1806."

"At three o'clock of the afternoon of the next day, the undersigned, being the clerks of this office, record their gratitude to their very worshipful chief, who hath feasted them at the shop of one Rolland, a cook in the Rue du Hasard, on good wines of three districts, Bordeaux, Champagne, and Burgundy, and on meats of good savor, from four o'clock of the afternoon until half-past seven, with coffee, liqueurs, and ices galore. Yet hath the presence of the worshipful master hindered us from the singing of *laudes* (praises) in clerkly modes, nor hath any clerk overstepped the limits of pleasing levity, inasmuch as our worthy, worshipful, and generous master hath promised to take us his clerks to see Talma in 'Britannicus' at the Theatre Français. Long may he flourish! May heaven shed blessings on our worshipful master! May he get a good price for this his glorious office! May rich clients come to his heart's desire! May his bills of costs be paid in gold on the nail! May all our future masters be like him! May he be ever beloved of his clerks, even when he is no more."

Next came thirty-three reports in due form of the receptions

of clerks who had joined the office, distinguished by various handwritings in different shades of ink, distinct phraseology, and different signatures, and containing such laudatory accounts of the good-cheer and wines as seemed to prove that the reports were drawn up on the spot and while they were in their cups.

Finally, in the month of June, 1822, at the time when Desroches himself had taken the oaths, there was this page of business-like prose:

"I, the undersigned François-Claude-Marie Godeschal, being called by Maître Desroches to fulfill the difficult duties of head-clerk in an office where there are as yet no clients, having heard from Maître Derville, whose chambers I have quitted, of the existence of certain famous archives of Basochian banquets and Festivals famous in the Courts, I besought our worshipful master to require them of his predecessor; for it was important to recover that document, which bore the date A. D. 1786, and was the sequel to the archives, deposited with those of the Courts of Law, of which the existence was certified by MM. Terrasse and Duclos, keepers of the said archives, going back to the year 1525, and giving historical details of the highest value as to the manners and cookery of the law-clerks in those days.

"This having been granted, the office was put in possession as at this time of these evidences of the worship constantly paid by our predecessors to the *Dive Bouteille* (divine bottle) and to good-cheer.

"Whereupon, for the edification of those that come after us, and to continue the sequence of time and cup, I have invited MM. Doublet, second clerk; Vassal, third clerk; Hérisson and Grandemain, assistant clerks; Dumets, office-boy, to breakfast on Sunday next at the Red Horse (*Cheval Rouge*), on the Quai Saint-Bernard, where we will celebrate the recovery of this volume containing the charter of our guzzlings.

"On this day, Sunday, June 27th, one dozen bottles of various wines were drunk and found excellent. Noteworthy, likewise, were two melons, pies *au jus romanum*, a fillet of beef, and a toast *Agaricibus*. Mademoiselle Mariette, the illustrious sister of the head-clerk, and leading lady at the Royal Academy of Music and Dancing, having given to the clerks of this office stalls for that evening's performance, she is hereby to be remembered for her act of generosity. And it is furthermore resolved that the said clerks shall proceed in a body to return thanks to that noble damsel, and to assure her that on the occasion of her first lawsuit, if the devil involves her in one, she shall pay no more than the bare costs; to which all set their hand.

"Godeschal was proclaimed the pride of his profession and the best of good fellows. May the man who treats others so handsomely soon be treating for a business of his own!"

The document was bespattered with wine-spots and with blots and flourishes like fireworks.

To give a complete idea of the stamp of truth impressed on this great work, it will suffice to extract the report of the reception supposed to have been provided by Oscar:

"To-day, Monday, the 25th day of November, 1822, after a meeting held yesterday in the Rue de la Cerisaie, hard by the Arsenal, at the house of Madame Clapart, the mother of the new pupil, by name Oscar Husson, we, the undersigned, declare that the breakfast far surpassed our expectations. It included radishes (red and black), gherkins, anchovies, butter, and olives as introductory *hors-d'œuvres* (side-dishes); of a noble rice soup that bore witness to a mother's care, inasmuch as we recognized in it a delicious flavor of chicken; and by the courtesy of the founder of the feast we were, in fact, informed that the trimmings of a handsome cold dish prepared by Madame Clapart had been judiciously added to the stock

concocted at home with such care as is known only in private kitchens.

"*Item:* the aforementioned cold chicken, surrounded by a sea of jelly, the work of the aforenamed mother.

"*Item:* an ox-tongue, *aux tomates* (with tomatoes), on which we proved ourselves by no means au-tomata.

"*Item:* a stew of pigeons of such flavor as led us to believe that angels had watched over the pot.

"*Item:* a dish of macaroni flanked by cups of chocolate custard.

"*Item:* dessert, consisting of eleven dishes, among which, in spite of the intoxication resulting from sixteen bottles of excellent wine, we discerned the flavor of an exquisitely and superlatively delicious preserve of peaches.

"The wines of Roussillon and of the Côte du Rhône quite outdid those of Champagne and Burgundy. A bottle of Maraschino, and one of Kirsch, finally, and in spite of delicious coffee, brought us to such a pitch of œnological rapture, that one of us—namely, Master Hérisson—found himself in the Bois de Boulogne when he believed he was still on the Boulevard du Temple; and that Jacquinaut, the gutter-jumper, aged fourteen, spoke to citizens' wives of fifty-seven, taking them for women of the street; to which all set their hand.

"Now, in the statutes of our Order there is a law strictly observed, which is, that those who aspire to the benefits and honors of the profession of the law shall restrict the magnificence of their 'welcome' to the due proportion with their fortune, inasmuch as it is a matter of public notoriety that no man with a private income serves Themis, and that all clerks are kept short of cash by their fond parents; wherefore, it is with great admiration that we here record the munificence of Madame Clapart, widow after her first marriage of Monsieur Husson, the new licentiate's father, and declare that it was worthy of the cheers we gave her at dessert; to which all set their hand."

This rigmarole had already taken in three new-comers, and three real breakfasts were duly recorded in this imposing volume.

On the day when a neophyte first made his appearance in the office, the boy always laid the archives on the desk in front of his seat, and the clerks chuckled as they watched the face of the new student while he read these grotesque passages. Each in turn, *inter pocula*, had been initiated into the secret of this practical joke, and the revelation, as may be supposed, filled them with the hope of mystifying other clerks in the future.

So, now, my readers can imagine the countenances of the four clerks and the boy, when Oscar, now in his turn the practical joker, uttered the words, "Bring out the Book."

Ten minutes later, a handsome young man came in, well grown and pleasant-looking, asked for Monsieur Desroches, and gave his name at once to Godeschal.

"I am Frédéric Marest," said he, "and have come to fill the place of third clerk here."

"Monsieur Husson," said Godeschal, "show the gentleman his seat, and induct him into our ways of work."

Next morning the new clerk found the Book lying on his writing-pad; but after reading the first pages, he only laughed, gave no invitation, and put the book aside on his desk.

"Gentlemen," said he, as he was leaving at five o'clock, "I have a cousin who is managing-clerk to Maître Léopold Hannequin, the notary, and I will consult him as to what I should do to pay my footing."

"This looks badly," cried Godeschal. "Our sucking magistrate is no greenhorn."

"Oh! we will lead him a life!" said Oscar.

Next afternoon, at about two o'clock, Oscar saw a visitor come in, and recognized in Hannequin's head-clerk Georges Marest.

"Why, here is Ali Pasha's friend!" said he, in an airy tone.

"What? you here, my lord, the Ambassador?" retorted Georges, remembering Oscar.

"Oh, ho! then you are old acquaintances?" said Godeschal to Georges.

"I believe you! We played the fool in company," said Georges, "above two years ago. Yes, I left Crottat to go to Hannequin in consequence of that very affair."

"What affair?" asked Godeschal.

"Oh, a mere nothing," replied Georges, with a wink at Oscar. "We tried to make game of a peer of France, and it was he who made us look foolish. And now, I hear you want to draw my cousin."

"We do not draw anything," said Oscar with dignity. "Here is our charter." And he held out the famous volume at a page where sentence of excommunication was recorded against a refractory student, who had been fairly driven out of the office for stinginess in 1788.

"Still, I seem to smell game," said Georges, "for here is the trail," and he pointed to the farcical archives. "However, my cousin and I can afford it, and we will give you a feast such as you never had, and which will stimulate your imagination when recording it here. To-morrow, Sunday, at the Rocher de Cancale, two o'clock. And I will take you afterward to spend the evening with Madame la Marquise de las Florentinas y Cabirolos, where we will gamble, and you will meet the élite of fashion. And so, gentlemen of the lower Court," he went on, with the arrogance of a notary, "let us have your best behavior, and carry your wine like gentlemen of the Regency."

"Hurrah!" cried the clerks like one man. "Bravo!—*Very well!—Vivat!* (bravo).—Long live the Marests!——"

"*Pontins,*" added the boy (Les Marais Pontins—the Pontine Marshes).

"What is up?" asked Desroches, coming out of his private room. "Ah! you are here, Georges," said he to the visitor. "I know you, you are leading my clerks into mischief." And he went back into his own room, calling Oscar.

"Here," said he, opening his cash-box, "are five hundred francs; go to the Palace of Justice and get the judgment in the case of Vandenesse *v.* Vandenesse out of the copying-clerk's office; it must be sent in this evening if possible. I promised Simon a refresher of twenty francs; wait for the copy if it is not ready, and do not let yourself be put off. Derville is quite capable of putting a drag on our wheels if it will serve his client. Count Félix de Vandenesse is more influential than his brother the ambassador, our client. So keep your eyes open, and, if the least difficulty arises, come to me at once."

Oscar set out, determined to distinguish himself in this little skirmish, the first job that had come to him since his promotion.

When Georges and Oscar were both gone, Godeschal tried to pump the new clerk as to what jest might lie, as he felt sure, under the name of the Marquise de las Florentinas y Cabirolos; but Frédéric carried on his cousin's joke with the coolness and gravity of a judge, and by his replies and his manner contrived to convey to all the clerks that the Marquise de las Florentinas was the widow of a Spanish grandee, whom his cousin was courting. Born in Mexico, and the daughter of a creole, this wealthy young widow was remarkable for the free-and-easy demeanor characteristic of the women of the Tropics.

"'She likes to laugh, She likes to drink, She likes to sing as we do,'" said he, quoting a famous song by Béranger. "And Georges," he went on, "is very rich; he inherited a fortune from his father, who was a widower, and who left him eighteen thousand francs a year, which, with twelve thousand left to each of us by an uncle, make an income of thirty

thousand francs. And he hopes to be Marquis de las Florentinas, for the young widow bears her title in her own right, and can confer it on her husband."

Though the clerks remained very doubtful as to the marquise, the prospect of a breakfast at the Rocher de Cancale, and of a fashionable soirée, filled them with joy. They reserved their opinion as to the Spanish lady, to judge her without appeal after having seen her.

The Marquise de las Florentinas was, in fact, neither more nor less than Mademoiselle Agathe Florentine Cabirolle, leading dancer at the Gaîté Theatre, at whose house Uncle Cardot sang "La Mère Godichon." Within a year of the very reparable loss of the late Madame Cardot, the fortunate merchant met Florentine one evening coming out of Coulon's dancing school. Dazzled by the beauty of this flower of the ballet—Florentine was then but thirteen—the retired storekeeper followed her to the Rue Pastourelle, where he had the satisfaction of learning that the future divinity of the dance owed her existence to a humble doorkeeper. The mother and daughter, transplanted within a fortnight to the Rue de Crussol, there found themselves in modest but easy circumstances. So it was to this "Patron of the Arts," to use a time-honored phrase, that the stage was indebted for the budding artist.

The generous Mæcenas almost turned their simple brains by given them mahogany furniture, curtains, carpets, and a well-fitted kitchen; he enabled them to keep a servant, and allowed them two hundred and fifty francs a month. Old Cardot, with his *ailes de pigeon*,* to them seemed an angel, and was treated as a benefactor should be. This was the golden age of the old man's passion.

For three years the singer of "La Mère Godichon" was so judicious as to keep Mademoiselle Cabirolle and her mother in this unpretentious house, close to the theatre; then,

* Pigeon-wings: style of his hair.

for love of the Terpsichorean art, he placed his protege under Vestris. And, in 1820, he was so happy as to see Florentine dance her first steps in the ballet of a spectacular melodrama called "The Ruins of Babylon." Florentine was now sixteen.

Soon after this first appearance Uncle Cardot was "an old screw," in the young lady's estimation; however, as he had tact enough to understand that a dancer at the Gaîté Theatre must keep up a position, and raised her monthly allowance to five hundred francs a month, if he was no longer an angel, he was at least a friend for life, a second father. This was the age of silver.

Between 1820 and 1823 Florentine went through the experience which must come to every ballet-dancer of nineteen or twenty. Her friends were the famous opera-singers Mariette and Tullia, Florine, and poor Coralie, so early snatched from Art, Love, and Camusot. And as little Uncle Cardot himself was now five years older, he had drifted into the indulgence of that half-fatherly affection which old men feel for the young talents they have trained, and whose successes are theirs. Beside, how and where should a man of sixty-eight have formed such another attachment as this with Florentine, who knew his ways, and at whose house he could sing "La Mère Godichon" with his friends? So the little man found himself under a half-matrimonial yoke of irresistible weight. This was the age of brass.

In the course of the five years of the ages of gold and of silver, Cardot had saved ninety thousand francs. The old man had had much experience; he foresaw that by the time he was seventy Florentine would be of age; she would probably come out on the opera stage, and, of course, expect the luxury and splendor of a leading lady. Only a few days before the evening now to be described, Cardot had spent forty-five thousand francs in establishing his Florentine in a suitable style, and had taken for her the apartment where the now

dead Coralie had been the joy of Camusot. In Paris, apartments and houses, like streets, have a destiny.

Glorying in magnificent plate, the leading lady of the Gaîté gave handsome dinners, spent three hundred francs a month on dress, never went out but in a private cabriolet, and kept a maid, a cook, and a page. What she aimed at, indeed, was a command to dance at the opera. The Cocon d'Or laid its handsomest products at the feet of its former master to please Mademoiselle Cabirolle, known as Florentine, just as, three years since, it had gratified every wish of Coralie's; but still without the knowledge of Uncle Cardot's daughter, for the father and his son-in-law had always agreed that decorum must be respected at home. Madame Camusot knew nothing of her husband's extravagance or her father's habits.

Now, after being the master for seven years, Cardot felt himself in tow of a pilot whose power of caprice was unlimited. But the unhappy old fellow was in love. Florentine alone must close his eyes, and he meant to leave her a hundred thousand francs. The age of iron had begun.

Georges Marest, handsome, young, and rich, with thirty thousand francs a year, was paying court to Florentine. Every dancer is by way of loving somebody as her protector loves her, and having a young man to escort her out walking or driving, and arrange excursions into the country. And, however disinterested, the affections of a leading lady are always a luxury, costing the happy object of her choice some little trifle. Dinners at the best restaurants, boxes at the play, carriages for driving in the environs of Paris, and choice wines lavishly consumed—for ballet-dancers live now like the athletes of antiquity.

Georges, in short, amused himself as young men do who suddenly find themselves independent of paternal discipline; and his uncle's death, almost doubling his income, enlarged his ideas. So long as he had but the eighteen thousand francs a year left him by his parents he intended to be a notary;

but, as his cousin remarked to Desroches' clerks, a man would be a noodle to start in a profession with as much money as others have when they give it up. So the retiring law-clerk was celebrating his first day of freedom by this breakfast, which was also to pay his cousin's footing.

Frédéric, more prudent than Georges, persisted in his legal career.

As a fine young fellow like Georges might very well marry a rich creole, and the Marquise de las Florentinas y Cabirolos might very well in the decline of life—as Frédéric hinted to his new companions—have preferred to marry for beauty rather than for noble birth, the clerks of Desroches' office—all belonging to impecunious families, and having no acquaintance with the fashionable world—got themselves up in their Sunday clothes, all impatience to see the Mexican Marquesa de las Florentinas y Cabirolos.

"What good-luck," said Oscar to Godeschal as he dressed in the morning, "that I should have just ordered a new coat, vest, trousers, and a pair of boots, and that my precious mother should have given me a new outfit on my promotion to be second clerk. I have six fine shirts with frills out of the dozen she gave me. We will make a good show? Oh! if only one of us could carry off the marquise from that Georges Marest!"

"A pretty thing for a clerk in Maître Desroches' office!" cried Godeschal. "Will you never be cured of your vanity —brat!"

"Oh, monsieur," said Madame Clapart, who had just come in to bring her son some ties, and heard the managing clerk's remarks, "would to God that Oscar would follow your good advice! It is what I am always saying to him, 'Imitate Monsieur Godeschal, take his advice,' is what I say."

"He is getting on, madame," said Godeschal, "but he must not often be so clumsy as he was yesterday, or he will lose his place in the master's good graces. Maître Desroches

cannot stand a man who is beaten. He sent your son on his first errand yesterday, to fetch away the copy of the judgment delivered in a will case, which two brothers, men of high rank, are fighting against each other, and Oscar allowed himself to be circumvented. The master was furious. It was all I could do to set things straight by going at six this morning to find the copying-clerk, and I made him promise to let me have the judgment in black and white by seven to-morrow morning."

"Oh, Godeschal," cried Oscar, going up to his superior and grasping his hand, "you are a true friend!"

"Yes, monsieur," said Madame Clapart, "it is a happy thing for a mother to feel that her son has such a friend as you, and you may believe that my gratitude will end only with my life. Oscar, beware of this Georges Marest; he has already been the cause of your first misfortune in life."

"How was that?" asked Godeschal.

The too-confiding mother briefly told the head-clerk the story of poor Oscar's adventure in Pierrotin's chaise.

"And I am certain," added Godeschal, "that the humbug has planned some trick on us this evening. I shall not go to the Marquise de las Florentinas. My sister needs my help in drawing up a fresh engagement, so I shall leave you at dessert. But be on your guard, Oscar. Perhaps they will make you gamble, and Desroches' office must not make a poor mouth. Here, you can stake for us both; here are a hundred francs," said the kind fellow, giving the money to Oscar, whose purse had been drained by the tailor and bootmaker. "Be careful; do not dream of playing beyond the hundred francs; do not let play or wine go to your head. By the mass! even a second clerk has a position to respect; he must not play on promissory-paper, nor overstep a due limit in anything. When a man is second clerk he must remember that he will presently be an attorney. So not to drink, not to play high, and to be moderate in all things, must be your rule of con-

duct. Above all, be in by midnight, for you must be at the Courts by seven to fetch away the copy of that judgment. There is no law against some fun, but business holds the first place."

"Do you hear, Oscar?" said Madame Clapart. "And see how indulgent Monsieur Godeschal is, and how he combines the enjoyments of youth with the demands of duty."

Madame Clapart, seeing the tailor and bootmaker waiting for Oscar, remained behind a moment with Godeschal to return the hundred francs he had just lent the boy.

"A mother's blessing be on you, monsieur, and on all you do," said she.

The mother had the supreme delight of seeing her boy well dressed; she had bought him a gold watch, purchased out of her savings, as a reward for his good conduct.

"You are on the list for the conscription next week," said she, "and as it was necessary to be prepared in case your number should be drawn, I went to see your Uncle Cardot; he is delighted at you being so high up at the age of twenty, and at your success in the examinations at the law-schools, so he has promised to find the money for a substitute. Do you not yourself feel some satisfaction in finding good conduct so well rewarded? If you still have to put up with some privations, think of the joy of being able to purchase a connection in only five years! And remember, too, dear boy, how happy you make your mother."

Oscar's face, thinned down a little by hard study, had developed into a countenance to which habits of business had given a look of gravity. He had done growing and had a beard; in short, from a boy he had become a man. His mother could not but admire him, and she kissed him fondly, saying—

"Yes, enjoy yourself, but remember Monsieur Godeschal's advice. By the way, I was forgetting: here is a present from our friend Moreau—a pocketbook."

"The very thing I want, for the chief gave me five hundred francs to pay for that confounded judgment in Vandenesse, and I did not want to leave them in my room."

"Are you carrying the money about with you?" said his mother in alarm. "Supposing you were to lose such a sum of money! Would you not do better to leave it with Monsieur Godeschal?"

"Godeschal!" cried Oscar, thinking his mother's idea admirable.

But Godeschal, like all clerks on Sunday, had his day to himself from ten o'clock, and was already gone.

When his mother had left, Oscar went out to lounge on the boulevards till it was time for the breakfast. How could he help airing those resplendent clothes, that he wore with such pride, and the satisfaction that every man will understand who began life in narrow circumstances. A neat, double-breasted, blue cashmere vest, black kerseymere trousers made with pleats, a well-fitting black coat, and a cane with a silver-gilt knob, bought out of his little savings, were the occasion of very natural pleasure to the poor boy, who remembered the clothes he had worn on the occasion of that journey to Presles, and the effect produced on his mind by Georges.

Oscar looked forward to a day of perfect bliss; he was to see the world of fashion for the first time that evening! And it must be admitted that to a lawyer's clerk starved of pleasure, who had for long been craving for a debauch, the sudden play of the senses was enough to obliterate the wise counsels of Godeschal and his mother. To the shame of the young be it said, good advice and warnings are never to seek. Apart from the morning's lecture, Oscar felt an instinctive dislike of Georges; he was humiliated in the presence of a man who had witnessed the scene in the drawing-room at Presles, when Moreau had dragged him to the count's feet.

The moral sphere has its laws; and we are always punished

if we ignore them. One, especially, the very beasts obey invariably and without delay. It is that which bids us fly from any one who has once injured us, voluntarily or involuntarily, intentionally or not. The being who has brought woe or discomfort on us is always odious. Whatever his rank, however near be the ties of affection, we must part. He is the emissary of our evil genius. Though Christian theory is opposed to such conduct, obedience to this inexorable law is essentially social and preservative. James II.'s daughter,* who sat on her father's throne, must have inflicted more than one wound on him before her usurpation. Judas must certainly have given Jesus some mortal thrust or ever he betrayed Him. There is within us a second-sight, a mind's eye, which foresees disasters; and the repugnance we feel to the fateful being is the consequence of this prophetic sense. Though religion may command us to resist it, distrust remains and its voice should be listened to.

Could Oscar, at the age of twenty, be so prudent? Alas! When, at two o'clock, Oscar went into the room of the Rocher de Cancale, where he found three guests beside his fellow-clerks—to wit, an old dragoon captain named Giroudeau; Finot, a journalist who might enable Florentine to get an engagement at the opera; and du Bruel, an author and friend of Tullia's, one of Mariette's rivals at the opera—the junior felt his hostility melt away under the first hand-shaking, the first flow of talk among young men, as they sat at a table handsomely laid for twelve. And indeed Georges was charming to Oscar.

"You are," said he, "following a diplomatic career, but in private concerns; for what is the difference between an ambassador and an attorney? Merely that which divides a nation from an individual. Ambassadors are the attorneys of a people. If I can ever be of any use to you, depend on me."

* Mary II., Queen of England.

"My word! I may tell you now," said Oscar, "you were the cause of a terrible catastrophe for me."

"Pooh!" said Georges, after listening to the history of the lad's tribulations. "It was Monsieur de Sérizy who behaved badly. His wife? I would not have her at a gift. And although the count is a minister of State and peer of France, I would not be in his red skin! He is a small-minded man, and I can afford to despise him now."

Oscar listened with pleasure to Georges' ironies on the Comte de Sérizy, for they seemed to diminish the gravity of his own fault, and he threw himself into the young man's spirit as he predicted that overthrow of the nobility of which the citizen class then had visions, to be realized in 1830.

They sat down at half-past three; dessert was not on the table before eight. Each course of dishes lasted two hours. None but law-clerks can eat so steadily! Digestions of eighteen and twenty are inexplicable to the medical faculty. The wine was worthy of Borrel, who had at that time succeeded the illustrious Balaine, the creator of the very best restaurant in Paris—and that is to say in the world—for refined and perfect cookery.

A full report of this Belshazzar's feast was drawn up at dessert, beginning with—*Inter pocula aurea restauranti, qui vulgo dicitur Rupes Cancalia:* and from this introduction the rapturous record may be imagined which was added to this Golden Book of the High Festivals of the Law.

Godeschal disappeared after signing his name, leaving the eleven feasters, prompted by the old captain of the Imperial Dragoons, to devote themselves to the wine, the liqueurs, and the toasts, over a dessert of pyramids of sweets and fruits like those of Thebes. By half-past ten the "boy" of the office was in a state which necessitated his removal; Georges packed him into a cab, gave the driver his mother's address, and paid his fare. Then the ten remaining guests, as drunk as Pitt and Dundas, talked of going on foot by the boulevards, the

night being very fine, as far as the residence of the marquise, where, at a little before midnight, they would find a brilliant company. The whole party longed to fill their lungs with fresh air; but excepting Georges, Giroudeau, Finot, and du Bruel, all accustomed to Parisian orgies, no one could walk. So Georges sent for three open carriages from a livery-stable, and took the whole party for an airing on the outer boulevards for an hour, from Montmartre to the Barrière du Trône, and back by Bercy, the quays, and the boulevards to the Rue de Vendôme.

The youngsters were still floating in the paradise of fancy to which intoxication transports boys, when their entertainer led them into Florentine's rooms. Here sat a dazzling assembly of the queens of the stage, who, at a hint, no doubt, from Frédéric, amused themselves by aping the manners of fine ladies. Ices were handed round, the chandeliers blazed with wax-lights. Tullia's footman, with those of Madame du Val-Noble and Florine, all in gaudy livery, carried round sweetmeats on silver trays. The hangings, choice products of the looms of Lyons, and looped with gold cord, dazzled the eye. The flowers of the carpet suggested a garden-bed. Costly toys and curiosities glittered on all sides. At first, and in the obfuscated state to which Georges had brought them, the clerks, and Oscar in particular, believed in the genuineness of the Marquesa de las Florentinas y Cabirolos.

On four tables set out for play gold-pieces lay in glittering heaps. In the drawing-room the women were playing at Vingt-et-un, Nathan, the famous author, holding the deal. Thus, after being carried tipsy and half-asleep along the dimly-lighted boulevards, the clerks woke to find themselves in Armida's Palace. Oscar, on being introduced by Georges to the sham marquise, stood dumfounded, not recognizing the ballet-dancer from the Gaîté in an elegant dress cut aristocratically low at the neck and richly trimmed with lace—a woman looking like a vignette in a keepsake, who received

them with an air and manners that had no parallel in the experience or the imagination of a youth so strictly bred as he had been. After he had admired all the splendor of the rooms, the beautiful women who displayed themselves and who had vied with each other in dress for this occasion—the inauguration of all this magnificence—Florentine took Oscar by the hand and led him to the table where Vingt-et-un was going on.

"Come, let me introduce you to the handsome Marquise d'Anglade, one of my friends——"

And she took the hapless Oscar up to pretty Fanny Beaupré, who, for the last two years, had filled poor Coralie's place in Camusot's affections. The young actress had just achieved a reputation in the part of a marquise in a melodrama at the Porte-Sainte-Martin, called the Famille d'Anglade, one of the successes of the day.

"Here, my dear," said Florentine, "allow me to introduce to you a charming youth who can be your partner in the game."

"Oh! that will be very nice?" replied the actress, with a fascinating smile, as she looked Oscar down from head to foot. "I am losing. We will go shares, if you like."

"I am at your orders, Madame la Marquise," said Oscar, taking a seat by her side.

"You shall stake," said she, "and I will play. You will bring me luck! There, that is my last hundred francs——" And the sham marquise took out a purse of which the rings were studded with diamonds, and produced five gold-pieces. Oscar brought out his hundred francs in five-franc pieces, already shamefaced at mingling the ignoble silver cart-wheels with the gold coin. In ten rounds the actress had lost the two hundred francs.

"Come! this is stupid!" she exclaimed. "I will take the bank. We will still be partners?" she asked of Oscar.

Fanny Beaupré rose, and the lad, who, like her, was now

the centre of attention to the whole table, dared not withdraw, saying that the devil alone was lodged in his purse. He was speechless, his tongue felt heavy and stuck to his palate.

"Lend me five hundred francs," said the actress to the dancer.

Florentine brought her five hundred francs, which she borrowed of Georges, who had just won at écarté eight times running.

"Nathan has won twelve hundred francs," said the actress to the clerk. "The dealer always wins; do not let us be made fools of," she whispered in his ear.

Every man of feeling, of imagination, of spirit, will understand that poor Oscar could not help opening his pocketbook and taking out the five-hundred-franc note. He looked at Nathan, the famous writer, who, in partnership with Florine, staked high against the dealer.

"Now then, boy, sweep it in!" cried Fanny Beaupré, signing to Oscar to take up two hundred francs that Florine and Nathan had lost.

The actress did not spare the losers her banter and jests. She enlivened the game by remarks of a character which Oscar thought strange; but delight stifled these reflections, for the two first deals brought in winnings of two thousand francs. Oscar longed to be suddenly taken ill and to fly, leaving his partner to her fate, but honor forbade it. Three more deals had carried away the profits. Oscar felt the cold sweat down his spine; he was quite sobered now. The two last rounds absorbed a thousand francs staked by the partners; Oscar felt thirsty and drank off three glasses of iced punch.

The actress led him into an adjoining room, talking nonsense to divert him; but the sense of his error so completely overwhelmed Oscar, to whom Desroches' face appeared like a vision in a dream, that he sank on to a splendid ottoman in a dark corner and hid his face in his handkerchief. He was

fairly crying. Florentine detected him in this attitude, too sincere not to strike an actress; she hurried up to Oscar, pulled away the handkerchief, and seeing his tears led him into a boudoir.

"What is the matter, my boy?" said she.

To this voice, these words, this tone, Oscar, recognizing the motherliness of a courtesan's kindness, replied—

"I have lost five hundred francs that my master gave me to pay to-morrow morning for a judgment; there is nothing for it but to throw myself into the river; I am disgraced."

"How can you be so silly?" cried Florentine. "Stay where you are, I will bring you a thousand francs. Try to recover it all, but only risk five hundred francs, so as to keep your chief's money. Georges plays a first-rate game at écarté; bet on him."

Oscar, in his dreadful position, accepted the offer of the mistress of the house.

"Ah!" thought he, "none but a marquise would be capable of such an action. Beautiful, noble, and immensely rich! Georges is a lucky dog!"

He received a thousand francs in gold from the hands of Florentine, and went to bet on the man who had played him this trick. The punters were pleased at the arrival of a new man, for they all, with the instinct of gamblers, went over to the side of Giroudeau, the old Imperial officer.

"Gentlemen," said Georges, "you will be punished for your defection, for I am in luck. Come, Oscar; we will do for them."

But Georges and his backer lost five games running. Having thrown away his thousand francs, Oscar, carried away by the gambling fever, insisted on holding the cards. As a result of the luck that often favors a beginner, he won; but Georges puzzled him with advice; he told him how to discard, and frequently snatched his hand from him, so that the conflict of two wills, two minds, spoiled the run of luck. In

short, by three in the morning, after many turns of fortune, and unhoped-for recoveries, still drinking punch, Oscar found himself possessed of no more than a hundred francs. He rose from the table, his brain heavy and dizzy, walked a few steps, and dropped on to a sofa in the boudoir, his eyes sealed in leaden slumbers.

"Mariette," said Fanny Beaupré to Godeschal's sister, who had come in at about two in the morning, "will you dine here to-morrow? My Camusot will be here and Father Cardot; we will make them mad."

"How?" cried Florentine. "My old man has not sent me word."

"He will be here this morning to tell you that he proposes to sing 'la Mère Godichon,'" replied Fanny Beaupré. "He must give a house-warming too, poor man."

"The devil take him and his orgies!" exclaimed Florentine. "He and his son-in-law are worse than magistrates or managers. After all, Mariette, you dine well here," she went on. "Cardot orders everything from Chevet. Bring your Duc de Maufrigneuse; we will have fun, and make them all dance."

Oscar, who caught the names of Cardot and Camusot, made an effort to rouse himself; but he could only mutter a word or two which were not heard, and fell back on the silk cushion.

"You are provided, I see," said Fanny Beaupré to Florentine, with a laugh.

"Ah! poor boy, he is drunk with punch and despair. He has lost some money his master had intrusted to him for some office business. He was going to kill himself, so I lent him a thousand francs, of which those robbers Finot and Giroudeau have fleeced him. Poor innocent!"

"But we must wake him," said Mariette. "My brother will stand no nonsense, nor his master either."

"Well, wake him if you can, and get him away," said

Florentine, going back into the drawing-room to take leave of those who were not gone.

The party then took to dancing—character dances, as they were called; and at daybreak Florentine went to bed very tired, having forgotten Oscar, whom nobody, in fact, remembered, and who was still sleeping soundly.

At about eleven o'clock a terrible sound awoke the lad, who recognized his Uncle Cardot's voice, and thought he might get out of the scrape by pretending still to be asleep, so he hid his face in the handsome, yellow velvet cushions on which he had passed the night.

"Really, my little Florentine," the old man was saying, "it is neither good nor nice of you. You were dancing last night in the Ruines, and then spent the night in an orgy. Why, it is simply destruction to your freshness, not to say that it is really ungrateful of you to inaugurate this splendid apartment without me, with strangers, without my knowing it —who knows what may have happened!"

"You old monster!" cried Florentine. "Have you not a key to come in whenever you like? We danced till half-past five, and you are so cruel as to wake me at eleven."

"Half-past eleven, Titine," said the old man humbly. "I got up early to order a dinner from Chevet worthy of an archbishop. How they have spoilt the carpets! Whom had you here?"

"You ought to make no complaints, for Fanny Beaupré told me that you and Camusot were coming, so I have asked the others to meet you—Tullia, du Bruel, Mariette, the Duc de Maufrigneuse, Florine, and Nathan. So you will have the five loveliest women who ever stood behind the footlights, and we will dance you a *pas de Zéphire.*"

"It is killing work to lead such a life!" cried old Cardot. "What a heap of broken glasses, what destruction! The anteroom is a scene of horror!"

At this moment the amiable old man stood speechless and

fascinated, like a bird under the gaze of a reptile. He caught sight of the outline of a young figure clothed in black cloth.

"Heyday! Mademoiselle Cabirolle!" said he at last.

"Well, what now?" said she.

The girl's eyes followed the direction of Père Cardot's gaze, and when she saw the youth still there, she burst into a fit of crazy laughter, which not only struck the old man dumb, but compelled Oscar to look round. Florentine pulled him up by the arm, and half choked with laughter as she saw the hang-dog look of the uncle and nephew.

"You here, nephew?"

"Oh ho! He is your nephew?" cried Florentine, laughing more than ever. "You never mentioned this nephew of yours. Then Mariette did not take you home?" said she to Oscar, who sat petrified. "What is to become of the poor boy?"

"Whatever he pleases!" replied old Cardot drily and turning to the door to go away.

"One minute, Papa Cardot; you will have to help your nephew out of the mess he has gotten into by my fault, for he has gambled away his master's money, five hundred francs, beside a thousand francs of mine which I lent him to get it back again."

"Wretched boy, have you lost fifteen hundred francs at play—at your age?"

"Oh! uncle, uncle!" cried the unhappy Oscar, cast by these words into the depths of horror at his position. He fell on his knees at his uncle's feet with clasped hands. "It is twelve o'clock; I am lost, disgraced. Monsieur Desroches will show no mercy—there was an important business, a matter on which he prides himself—I was to have gone this morning to fetch away the copy of the judgment in Vandenesse *v.* Vandenesse! What has happened? What will become of me? Save me for my father's sake—for my aunt's. Come with me to Maître Desroches and explain; find some excuse——"

The words came out in gasps, between sobs and tears that might have softened the Sphinx in the desert of Luxor.

"Now, old skinflint," cried the dancer in tears, "can you leave your own nephew to disgrace, the son of the man to whom you owe your fortune, since he is Oscar Husson? Save him, I say, or Titine refuses to own you as her milord!"

"But how came he here?" asked the old man.

"What! so as to forget the hour when he should have gone the errand he speaks of? Don't you see, he got drunk and dropped there, dead-tired and sleepy? Georges and his cousin Frédéric treated Desroches' clerks yesterday at the Rocher de Cancale."

Cardot looked at her, still doubtful.

"Come, now, old baboon, if it were anything more should I not have hidden him more effectually?" cried she.

"Here, then, take the five hundred francs, you scamp!" said Cardot to his nephew. "That is all you will ever have of me. Go and make matters up with your master if you can. I will repay the thousand francs mademoiselle lent you, but never let me hear your name again."

Oscar fled, not wishing to hear more; but when he was in the street he did not know where to go.

The chance which ruins men, and the chance that serves them, seemed to be playing against each other on equal terms for Oscar that dreadful morning; but he was destined to fail with a master who, when he made up his mind, never changed it.

Mariette, on returning home, horrified at what might befall her brother's charge, wrote a line to Godeschal, inclosing a five-hundred-franc note, and telling her brother of Oscar's drunken bout and disasters. The good woman, ere she went to sleep, instructed her maid to take this letter to Desroches' chambers before seven. Godeschal, on his part, waking at six, found no Oscar. He at once guessed what had happened.

He took five hundred francs out of his savings and hurried off to the copying-clerk to fetch the judgment, so as to lay it before Desroches for signature in his office at eight. Desroches, who always rose at four, came to his room at seven o'clock. Mariette's maid, not finding her mistress' brother in his attic, went down to the office and was there met by Desroches, to whom she very naturally gave the note.

"Is it a matter of business?" asked the lawyer. "I am Maître Desroches."

"You can see, monsieur," said the woman.

Desroches opened the letter and read it. On finding the five-hundred-franc note he went back into his own room, furious with his second clerk. Then at half-past seven he heard Godeschal dictating a report on the judgment to another clerk, and a few minutes later Godeschal came into the room in triumph.

"Was it Oscar Husson who went to Simon this morning?" asked Desroches.

"Yes, monsieur," replied Godeschal.

"Who gave him the money?" said the lawyer.

"You," said Godeschal, "on Saturday."

"It rains five-hundred-franc notes, it would seem!" cried Desroches. "Look here, Godeschal, you are a good fellow, but that little wretch Husson does not deserve your generosity. I hate a fool, but yet more I hate people who will go wrong in spite of the care of those who are kind to them." He gave Godeschal Mariette's note and the five hundred francs she had sent. "Forgive me for opening it, but the maid said it was a matter of business. You must get rid of Oscar."

"What trouble I have had with that poor little ne'er-do-well!" said Godeschal. "That scoundrel Georges Marest is his evil genius; he must avoid him like the plague, for I do not know what might happen if they met a third time."

"How is that?" asked Desroches, and Godschal sketched the story of the practical joking on the journey to Presles.

"To be sure," said the lawyer. "I remember Joseph Bridau told me something about that at the time. It was to that meeting that we owed the Comte de Sérizy's interest in Bridau's brother."

At this moment Moreau came in, for this suit over the Vandenesse property was an important affair to him. The marquis wanted to sell the Vandenesse estate in lots, and his brother opposed such a proceeding.

Thus the land agent was the recipient of the justifiable complaints and sinister prophecies fulminated by Desroches as against his second clerk; and the unhappy boy's most friendly protector was forced to the conclusion that Oscar's vanity was incorrigible.

"Make a pleader of him," said Desroches; "he only has to pass his final; in that branch of the law his faults may prove to be useful qualities, for conceit spurs the tongue of half of our advocates."

As it happened, Clapart was at this time out of health, and nursed by his wife, a painful and thankless task. The man worried the poor soul, who had hitherto never known how odious the nagging and spiteful taunts can be in which a half-imbecile creature gives vent to his irritation when poverty drives him into a sort of cunning rage. Delighted to have a sharp dagger that he could drive home to her motherly heart, he had suspected the fears for the future which were suggested to the hapless woman by Oscar's conduct and faults. In fact, when a mother has received such a blow as she had felt from the adventure at Presles she lives in perpetual alarm; and by the way in which Madame Clapart cried up Oscar whenever he achieved a success, Clapart understood all her secret fears and would stir them up on the slightest pretext.

"Well, well, Oscar is getting on better than I expected of him; I always said his journey to Presles was only a blunder due to inexperience. Where is the young man who never made a mistake? Poor, boy, he is heroic in his endurance

of the privations he would never have known if his father had lived. God grant he may control his passions!" and so on.

So, while so many disasters were crowding on each other in the Rue de Vendôme and the Rue de Béthisy, Clapart, sitting by the fire wrapped in a shabby dressing-gown, was watching his wife, who was busy cooking over the bedroom fire some soup, Clapart's herb tea, and her own breakfast.

"Good heavens! I wish I knew how things fell out yesterday. Oscar was to breakfast at the Rocher de Cancale, and spend the evening with some marquise——"

"Oh! don't be in a hurry; sooner or later murder will out," retorted her husband. "Do you believe in the marquise? Go on; a boy who has his five senses and a love of extravagance—as Oscar has, after all—can find marquises on every bush costing their weight in gold! He will come home some day loaded with debt——"

"You don't know how to be cruel enough, and to drive me to despair!" exclaimed Madame Clapart. "You complained that my son ate up all your salary, and he never cost you a sou. For two years you have not had a fault to find with Oscar, and now he is second clerk, his uncle and Monsieur Moreau provide him with everything, and he has eight hundred francs a year of his own earning. If we have bread in our old age, we shall owe it to that dear boy. You really are too unjust."

"You consider my foresight an injustice?" said the sick man sourly.

There came at this moment a sharp ring at the bell. Madame Clapart ran to open the door, and then remained in the outer room, talking to Moreau, who had come himself to soften the blow that the news of Oscar's levity must be to his poor mother.

"What! He lost his master's money?" cried Madame Clapart in tears.

"Aha! what did I tell you?" said Clapart, who appeared like a spectre in the doorway of the drawing-room, to which he had shuffled across under the prompting of overweening curiosity.

"But what is to be done with him?" said his wife, whose distress left her insensible to this stab.

"Well, if he bore my name," said Moreau, "I should calmly allow him to be drawn for the conscription, and if he should be called to serve, I would not pay for a substitute. This is the second time that sheer vanity has brought him into mischief. Well, vanity may lead him to some brilliant action, which will win him promotion as a soldier. Six years' service will at any rate add a little weight to his feather-brain, and as he has only his final examination to pass, he will not do so badly if he finds himself a pleader at six-and-twenty, if he chooses to go to the bar after paying the blood-tax, as they say. This time, at any rate, he will have had his punishment, he will gain experience and acquire habits of subordination. He will have served his apprenticeship to life before serving it in the Law Courts."

"If that is the sentence you would pronounce on a son," said Madame Clapart, "I see that a father's heart is very unlike a mother's. My poor Oscar—a soldier——?"

"Would you rather see him jump head-foremost into the Seine after doing something to disgrace himself? He can never now be an attorney; do you think he is fitted yet to be an advocate? While waiting till he reaches years of discretion, what will he become? A thorough scamp; military discipline will at any rate preserve him from that."

"Could he not go into another office? His Uncle Cardot would certainly pay for a substitute—and Oscar will dedicate his thesis to him——"

The clatter of a cab, in which was piled all Oscar's personal property, announced the wretched lad's return, and in a few minutes he made his appearance.

"So here you are, Master Joli-Cœur!"* exclaimed Clapart.

Oscar kissed his mother, and held out a hand to Monsieur Moreau, which that gentleman would not take. Oscar answered this contempt with a look to which reproach lent a firmness new to the bystanders.

"Listen, Monsieur Clapart," said the boy, so suddenly grown to be a man; "you worry my poor mother beyond endurance, and you have a right to do so; she is your wife—for her sins. But it is different with me. In a few months I shall be of age, and you have no power over me even while I am a minor. I have never asked you for anything. Thanks to this gentleman, I have never cost you one sou, and I owe you no sort of gratitude; so, have the goodness to leave me in peace."

Clapart, startled by this apostrophe, went back to his armchair by the fire. The reasoning of the lawyer's clerk and the suppressed fury of a young man of twenty, who had just had a sharp lecture from his friend Godeschal, had reduced the sick man's imbecility to silence, once and for all.

"An error into which you would have been led quite as easily as I, at my age," said Oscar to Moreau, "made me commit a fault which Desroches thinks serious, but which is really trivial enough; I am far more vexed with myself for having taken Florentine of the Gaîté Theatre, for a marquise, and actresses for women of rank, than for having lost fifteen hundred francs at a little orgy where everybody, even Godeschal, was somewhat screwed. This time, at any rate, I have hurt no one but myself. I am thoroughly cured. If you will help me, Monsieur Moreau, I swear to you that in the course of the six years during which I must remain a clerk before I can practice——"

"Stop a bit!" said Moreau. "I have three children; I can make no promises."

* Pretty heart.

"Well, well," said Madame Clapart, with a reproachful look at Moreau, "your Uncle Cardot——"

"No more an Uncle Cardot for me," replied Oscar, and he related the adventure of the Rue de Vendôme.

Madame Clapart, feeling her knees give way under the weight of her body, dropped on one of the dining-room chairs as if a thunderbolt had fallen.

"Every possible misfortune at once!" said she, and fainted away.

Moreau lifted the poor woman in his arms, and carried her to her bed. Oscar stood motionless and speechless.

"There is nothing for you but to serve as a soldier," said the estate agent, coming back again. "That idiot Clapart will not last three months longer, it seems to me; your mother will not have a sou in the world; ought I not rather to keep for her the little money I can spare? This was what I could not say to you in her presence. As a soldier, you will earn your bread, and you may meditate on what life is to the penniless."

"I might draw a lucky number," said Oscar.

"And if you do? Your mother has been a very good mother to you. She gave you an education, she started you in a good way; you have lost it; what could you do now? Without money, a man is helpless, as you now know, and you are not the man to begin all over again by pulling off your coat and putting on a workman's or artisan's blouse. And then your mother worships you. Do you want to kill her? For she would die of seeing you fallen so low."

Oscar sat down, and could no longer control his tears, which flowed freely. He understood now a form of appeal which had been perfectly incomprehensible at the time of his first error.

"Penniless folk ought to be perfect!" said Moreau to himself, not appreciating how deeply true this cruel verdict was.

"My fate will soon be decided," said Oscar; "the num-

bers are drawn the day after to-morrow. Between this and then I will come to some decision."

Moreau, deeply grieved in spite of his austerity, left the family in the Rue de la Cerisaie to their despair.

Three days after Oscar drew Number 27. To help the poor lad, the ex-steward of Presles found courage enough to go to the Comte de Sérizy and beg his interest to get Oscar into the cavalry. As it happened, the count's son, having come out well at his last examination on leaving the Polytechnic, had been passed by favor, with the rank of sub-lieutenant, into the cavalry regiment commanded by the Duc de Maufrigneuse. And so, in the midst of his fall, Oscar had the small piece of luck of being enlisted in this fine regiment at the Comte de Sérizy's recommendation, with the promise of promotion to be quartermaster in a year's time.

Thus chance placed the lawyer's clerk under the command of Monsieur de Sérizy's son.

After some days of pining, Madame Clapart, who was deeply stricken by all these misfortunes, gave herself up to the remorse which is apt to come over mothers whose conduct has not been blameless, and who, as they grow old, are led to repent. She thought of herself as one accursed. She ascribed the miseries of her second marriage and all her son's ill-fortune to the vengeance of God, who was punishing her in expiation of the sins and pleasures of her youth. This idea soon became a conviction. The poor soul went to confession, for the first time in forty years, to the vicar of the church of Saint-Paul, the Abbé Gaudron, who plunged her into the practices of religion.

But a spirit so crushed and so loving as Madame Clapart's could not fail to become simply pious. The Aspasia of the Directoire yearned to atone for her sins that she might bring the blessing of God down on the head of her beloved Oscar, and before long she had given herself up to the most earnest

practices of devotion and works of piety. She believed that she had earned the favor of heaven when she had succeeded in saving Monsieur Clapart, who, thanks to her care, lived to torment her; but she persisted in seeing in the tyranny of this half-witted old man the trials inflicted by Him who loves while He chastens us.

Oscar's conduct meanwhile was so satisfactory that in 1830 he was first quartermaster of the company under the Vicomte de Sérizy, equivalent in rank to a sub-lieutenant of the line, as the Duc de Maufrigneuse's regiment was attached to the King's Guards. Oscar Husson was now five-and-twenty. As the regiments of Guards were always quartered in Paris, or within thirty leagues of the capital, he could see his mother from time to time and confide his sorrows to her, for he was clear-sighted enough to perceive that he could never rise to be an officer. At that time cavalry officers were almost always chosen from among the younger sons of the nobility, and men without the distinguishing *de* got on but slowly. Oscar's whole ambition was to get out of the Guards and enter some cavalry regiment of the line as a sub-lieutenant; and in the month of February, 1830, Madame Clapart, through the interest of the Abbé Gaudron, now at the head of his parish, gained the favor of the Dauphiness, which secured Oscar's promotion.

Although the ambitious young soldier professed ardent devotion to the Bourbons, he was at heart a liberal. In the struggle, in 1830, he took the side of the people. This defection, which proved to be important by reason of the way in which it acted, drew public attention to Oscar Husson. In the moment of triumph, in the month of August, Oscar, promoted to be lieutenant, received the cross of the Legion of Honor, and succeeded in obtaining the post of aide-de-camp to La Fayette, who made him captain in 1832. When this devotee to "the best of all Republics" was deprived of his command of the National Guard, Oscar Husson, whose devo-

tion to the new royal family was almost fanaticism, was sent as major with a regiment to Africa on the occasion of the first expedition undertaken by the prince. The Vicomte de Sérizy was now lieutenant-colonel of that regiment. At the fight of the Macta, where the Arabs remained masters of the field, Monsieur de Sérizy was left wounded under his dead horse. Oscar addressed his company.

"It is riding to our death," said he, "but we cannot desert our colonel."

He was the first to charge the enemy, and his men, quite electrified, followed. The Arabs, in the shock of surprise at this furious and unexpected attack, allowed Oscar to pick up his colonel, whom he took on his horse and rode off at a pelting gallop, though in this act, carried out in the midst of furious fighting, he had two cuts from a yataghan on the left arm.

Oscar's valiant conduct was rewarded by the cross of an officer of the Legion of Honor, and promotion to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. He nursed the Vicomte de Sérizy with devoted affection; the Comtesse de Sérizy joined her son and carried him to Toulon, where, as all the world knows, he died of his wounds. Madame de Sérizy did not part her son from the man who, after rescuing him from the Arabs, had cared for him with such unfailing devotion.

Oscar himself was so severely wounded that the surgeons called in by the countess to attend her son pronounced amputation necessary. The count forgave Oscar his follies on the occasion of the journey to Presles, and even regarded himself as the young man's debtor when he had buried his only surviving son in the chapel of the Château de Sérizy.

A long time after the battle of the Macta, an old lady dressed in black, leaning on the arm of a man of thirty-four, at once recognizable as a retired officer by the loss of one arm and the rosette of the Legion of Honor at his button-hole,

was to be seen at eight o'clock one morning, waiting under the gateway of the Silver Lion, Rue du Faubourg, Saint-Denis, till the diligence should be ready to start.

Pierrotin, the manager of the coach services of the Valley of the Oise, passing by Saint-Leu-Taverny and l'Isle-Adam, as far as Beaumont, would hardly have recognized in this bronzed officer that little Oscar Husson whom he had once driven to Presles. Madame Clapart, a widow at last, was quite as unrecognizable as her son. Clapart, one of the victims of Fieschi's machine, had done his wife a better turn by the manner of his death than he had ever done her in his life. Of course, Clapart, the idler, the lounger, had taken up a place on *his* boulevard to see *his* legion reviewed. Thus the poor bigot had found her name put down by the government for a pension of fifteen hundred francs a year by the decree which indemnified the victims of this infernal machine.

The vehicle, to which four dappled-gray horses were now being harnessed—steeds worthy of the *Messageries royales*—was in four divisions, the *coupé*, the *intérieur*, the *rotonde* behind, and the *imperiale* at top. It was identically the same as the diligences called *Gondoles*, which, in our day, still maintain a rivalry on the Versailles road with two lines of railway. Strong and light, well painted and clean, lined with good blue cloth, furnished with blinds of arabesque design and red morocco cushions, the *Hirondelle de l' Oise* (Swallow of the Oise) could carry nineteen travelers. Pierrotin, though he was by this time fifty-six, was little changed. He still wore a blouse over his black coat, and still smoked his short pipe, as he watched two porters in stable-livery piling numerous packages on the roof of his coach.

"Have you taken seats?" he asked of Madame Clapart and Oscar, looking at them as if he were searching his memory for some association of ideas.

"Yes, two inside places, name of Bellejambe, my servant,"

said Oscar. "He was to take them when he left the house last evening."

"Oh, then monsieur is the new collector at Beaumont," said Pierrotin. "You are going down to take the place of Monsieur Margueron's nephew?"

"Yes," replied Oscar, pressing his mother's arm as a hint to her to say nothing. For now he in his turn wished to remain unknown for a time.

At this instant Oscar was startled by recognizing Georges' voice calling from the street—

"Have you a seat left, Pierrotin?"

"It strikes me that you might say Monsieur Pierrotin without breaking your jaw," said the coach-owner angrily.

But for the tone of his voice Oscar could never have recognized the practical joker who had twice brought him such ill-luck. Georges, almost bald, had but three or four locks of hair left above his ears, and carefully combed up to disguise his bald crown as far as possible. A development of fat in the wrong place, a bulbous stomach, had spoiled the elegant figure of the once handsome young man. Almost vulgar in shape and mien, Georges showed the traces of disaster in love, and of a life of constant debauchery, in a spotty red complexion, and thickened, vinous features. His eyes had lost the sparkle and eagerness of youth, which can only be preserved by decorous and studious habits.

Georges, dressed with evident indifference to his appearance, wore a pair of trousers with straps, but shabby, and of a style that demanded patent-leather shoes; those he wore, thick and badly polished, were at least three-quarters of a year old, which is in Paris as much as three years anywhere else. A shabby vest, a tie elaborately knotted, though it was but an old bandana, betrayed the covert penury to which a decayed dandy may be reduced. To crown all, at this early hour of the day Georges wore a dress-coat instead of a morning-coat, the symptom of positive poverty. This coat, which must

have danced at many a ball, had fallen, like its owner, from the opulence it once represented to the duties of daily scrub. The seams of the black cloth showed white ridges, the collar was greasy, and wear had pinked out the cuffs into a dog-tooth edge. Still, Georges was bold enough to invite attention by wearing lemon-colored gloves—rather dirty, to be sure, and on one finger the outline of a large ring was visible in black.

Round his tie, of which the ends were slipped through a pretentious gold ring, twined a brown silk chain in imitation of hair, ending no doubt in a watch. His hat, though stuck on with an air, showed more evidently than all these other symptoms the poverty of a man who never has sixteen francs to spend at the hatter's when he lives from hand to mouth. Florentine's lover of yore flourished a cane with a chased handle, silver-gilt, but horribly dented. His blue trousers, tartan waistcoat, sky-blue tie, and red-striped cotton shirt bore witness, in spite of so much squalor, to such a passion for show that the contrast was not merely laughable, but a lesson.

"And this is Georges?" said Oscar to himself. "A man I left in possession of thirty thousand francs a year!"

"Has Monsieur *de* Pierrotin still a vacant seat in his coupé?" asked Georges ironically.

"No, my coupé is taken by a peer of France, Monsieur Moreau's son-in-law, Monsieur le Baron de Canalis, with his wife and his mother-in-law. I have only a seat in the body of the coach."

"The deuce! It would seem that under every form of government peers of France travel in Pierrotin's conveyances! I will take the seat in the *intérieur*," said Georges, with a reminiscence of the journey with Monsieur de Sérizy.

He turned to stare at Oscar and the widow, but recognized neither mother nor son. Oscar was deeply tanned by the African sun; he had a very thick mustache and whiskers; his

hollow cheeks and marked features were in harmony with his military deportment. The officer's rosette, the loss of an arm, the plain dark dress, would all have been enough to mislead Georges' memory, if indeed he remembered his former victim. As to Madame Clapart, whom he had scarcely seen on the former occasion, ten years spent in pious exercises of the severest kind had absolutely transformed her. No one could have imagined that this sort of Gray Sister hid one of the Aspasias of 1797.

A huge old man, plainly but very comfortably dressed, in whom Oscar recognized old Léger, came up slowly and heavily; he nodded familiarly to Pierrotin, who seemed to regard him with the respect due in all countries to millionaires.

"Heh! why, it is Father Léger! more ponderous than ever!" cried Georges.

"Whom have I the honor of addressing?" asked the farmer very drily.

"What! Don't you remember Colonel Georges, Ali Pasha's friend? We traveled this road together, once upon a time, with the Comte de Sérizy, who preserved his incognito."

One of the commonest follies of persons who have come down in the world is insisting on recognizing people, and on being recognized.

"You are very much changed," said the old farmer, now worth two millions of francs.

"Everything changes," said Georges. "Look at the Silver Lion inn and at Pierrotin's coach, and see if they are the same as they were fourteen years since."

"Pierrotin is now owner of all the coaches that serve the Oise Valley, and has very good vehicles," said M. Léger. "He is a citizen now of Beaumont, and keeps a hotel there where his coaches put up; he has a wife and daughter who know their business——"

An old man of about seventy came out of the inn and

joined the group of travelers who were waiting to be told to get in.

"Come along, Papa Reybert!" said Léger. "We have no one to wait for now but your great man."

"Here he is," said the land steward of Presles, turning to Joseph Bridau.

Neither Oscar nor Georges would have recognized the famous painter, for his face was the strangely worn countenance now so well known, and his manner was marked by the confidence born of success. His black overcoat displayed the ribbon of the Legion of Honor. His dress, which was careful in all points, showed that he was on his way to some country fête.

At this moment a clerk with a paper in his hand bustled out of an office constructed at one end of the old kitchen of the Silver Lion, and stood in front of the still unoccupied *coupé*.

"Monsieur and Madame de Canalis, three places!" he called out; then, coming to the *intérieur*, he said, "Monsieur Bellejambe, two places; Monsieur Reybert, three; Monsieur—your name?" added he to Georges.

"Georges Marest," replied the fallen hero in an undertone.

The clerk then went to the *rotonde* (the omnibus at the back of the old French diligence), round which stood a little crowd of nurses, country-folk, and small storekeepers, taking leave of each other. After packing the six travelers, the clerk called the names of four youths who clambered up on to the seat on the *imperiale*, and then said "Right behind!" as the signal for starting.

Pierrotin took his place by the driver, a young man in a blouse, who in his turn said, "Get up," to his horses.

The coach, set in motion by four horses purchased at Roye, was pulled up the hill of the Faubourg Saint-Denis at a gentle trot, but having once gained the level above Saint Lau-

rent, it spun along like a mail-coach as far as Saint-Denis in forty minutes. They did not stop at the inn famous for cheese-cakes, but turned off to the left of Saint-Denis, down the valley of Montmorency.

It was here, as they turned, that Georges broke the silence which had been kept so far by the travelers who were studying each other.

"We keep rather better time than we did fifteen years ago," said he, taking out a silver watch. "Eh! Father Léger?" he asked.

"People are so condescending as to address me as Monsieur Léger," retorted the millionaire.

"Why, this is our blusterer of my first journey to Presles," exclaimed Joseph Bridau. "Well, and have you been fighting new campaigns in Asia, Africa, and America?" asked the great painter.

"By Jupiter! I helped in the Revolution of July, and that was enough, for it ruined me."

"Oho! you helped in the Revolution of July, did you?" said Bridau. "I am not surprised, for I never could believe what I was told, that it made itself."

"How strangely meetings come about," said Monsieur Léger, turning to Reybert. "Here, Papa Reybert, you see the notary's clerk to whom you owe indirectly your place as steward of the estates of Sérizy."

"But we miss Mistigris, now so famous as Léon de Lora," said Joseph Bridau, "and the little fellow who was such a fool as to tell the count all about his skin complaints—which he has cured at last—and his wife, from whom he has parted to die in peace."

"Monsieur le Comte is missing too," said Reybert.

"Oh!" said Bridau sadly, "I am afraid that the last expedition he will ever make will be to l'Isle-Adam, to be present at my wedding."

"He still drives out in the park," remarked old Reybert.

"Does his wife come often to see him?" asked Léger.

"Once a month," replied old Reybert. "She still prefers Paris; she arranged the marriage of her favorite niece, Mademoiselle du Rouvre, to a very rich young Pole, Count Laginski, in September last——"

"And who will inherit Monsieur de Sérizy's property?" asked Madame Clapart.

"His wife. She will bury him," replied Georges. "The countess is still handsome for a woman of fifty-four, still very elegant, and at a distance quite illusory——"

"Elusive, you mean? She will always elude you," Léger put in, wishing, perhaps, to turn the tables on the man who had mystified him.

"I respect her," said Georges in reply. "But, by the way, what became of that steward who was so abruptly dismissed in those days?"

"Moreau?" said Léger. "He is Deputy now for Seine et Oise."

"Oh, yes, the famous *centre* Moreau (of l'Oise)?"* said Georges.

"Yes," replied Léger. "*Monsieur* Moreau (of l'Oise). He helped rather more than you in the Revolution of July, and he has lately bought the splendid estate of Pointel, between Presles and Beaumont."

"What, close to the place he managed, and so near his old master! That is in very bad taste," cried Georges.

"Do not talk so loud," said Monsieur de Reybert, "for Madame Moreau and her daughter, the Baroness de Canalis, and her son-in-law, the late minister, are in the *coupé*."

"What fortune did he give her that the great orator would marry his daughter?"

"Well, somewhere about two millions," said Léger.

"He had a pretty taste in millions," said Georges, smiling,

* Moreau (pronounced mo-rō) means extremely well—the play is on the *centre* O in "of l'Oise."

and in an undertone, "He began feathering his nest at Presles——"

"Say no more about Monsieur Moreau," exclaimed Oscar. "It seems to me that you might have learned to hold your tongue in a public conveyance!"

Joseph Bridau looked for a few seconds at the one-armed officer, and then said—

"Monsieur is not an ambassador, but his rosette shows that he has risen in the world; and nobly too, for my brother and General Giroudeau have often mentioned you in their dispatches——"

"Oscar Husson!" exclaimed Georges Marest. "On my honor, but for your voice, I certainly should never have recognized you."

"Ah! is this the gentleman who so bravely carried off the Vicomte Jules de Sérizy from the Arabs?" asked Reybert, "and to whom Monsieur le Comte has given the collectorship at Beaumont pending his appointment to Pontoise?"

"Yes, monsieur," said Oscar.

"Well, then," said the painter, "I hope, monsieur, that you will do me the pleasure of being present at my marriage, at l'Isle-Adam."

"Whom are you marrying?" asked Oscar.

"Mademoiselle Léger, Monsieur de Reybert's granddaughter. Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy was good enough to arrange the matter for me. I owe him much as an artist, and he was anxious to establish my fortune before his death—I had scarcely thought of it——"

"Then Père Léger married?" said Georges.

"My daughter," said Monsieur de Reybert, "and without any money."

"And he has children?"

"One daughter. Quite enough for a widower who had no children," said Père Léger. "And, like my partner Moreau, I shall have a famous man for my son-in-law."

"So you still live at l'Isle-Adam?" said Georges to Monsieur Léger, almost respectfully.

"Yes; I purchased Cassan."

"Well, I am happy in having chosen this particular day for doing the Oise Valley," said Georges, "for you may do me a service, gentlemen."

"In what way?" asked Léger.

"Well, thus," said Georges. "I am employed by the Society of *l'Espérance*,* which has just been incorporated, and its by-laws approved by letters-patent from the King. This institution is, in ten years, to give marriage portions to girls and annuities to old people; it will pay for the education of children; in short, it takes care of everybody——"

"So I should think!" said old Léger, laughing. "In short, you are an insurance agent."

"No, monsieur, I am inspector-general, instructed to establish agencies and correspondents with the company throughout France; I am acting only till the agents are appointed; for it is a delicate and difficult matter to find honest men——"

"But how did you lose your thirty thousand francs a year?" asked Oscar.

"As you lost your arm!" the ex-notary's clerk replied sharply to the ex-attorney's clerk.

"Then you invested your fortune in some brilliant deed?" said Oscar, with somewhat bitter irony.

"By Jupiter! my investments are a sore subject. I have more deeds than enough."

They had reached Saint-Leu-Taverny, where the travelers got out while they changed horses. Oscar admired the briskness with which Pierrotin unbuckled the straps of the whiffletree, while his driver took out the leaders.

"Poor Pierrotin!" thought he. "Like me, he has not risen much in life. Georges has sunk into poverty. All the others, by speculation and skill, have made fortunes. Do we

*Lit.: Trust company.

breakfast here, Pierrotin?" he asked, clapping the man on the shoulder.

"I am not the driver," said Pierrotin.

"What are you, then?" asked Colonel Husson.

"I am the proprietor," replied Pierrotin.

"Well, well, do not quarrel with an old friend," said Oscar, pointing to his mother, but still with a patronizing air; "do you not remember Madame Clapart?"

It was the more graceful of Oscar to name his mother to Pierrotin, because at this moment Madame Moreau (de l'Oise) had gotten out of the *coupé* and looked scornfully at Oscar and his mother as she heard the name.

"On my honor, madame, I should never have known you; nor you either, monsieur. You get it hot in Africa, it would seem?"

The disdainful pity Oscar had felt for Pierrotin was the last blunder into which vanity betrayed the hero of this scene; and for that he was punished, though not too severely. On this wise: Two months after he had settled at Beaumont-sur-Oise, Oscar paid his court to Mademoiselle Georgette Pierrotin, whose fortune amounted to a hundred and fifty thousand francs, and by the end of the winter of 1838 he married the daughter of the owner of the Oise Valley coach service.

The results of the journey to Presles had given Oscar discretion, the evening at Florentine's had disciplined his honesty, the hardships of a military life had taught him the value of social distinctions and submission to fate. He was prudent, capable, and consequently happy. The Comte de Sérizy, before his death, obtained for Oscar the place of revenue collector at Pontoise. The influence of Monsieur Moreau (de l'Oise), of the Comtesse de Sérizy, and of Monsieur le Baron de Canalis, who, sooner or later, will again have a seat in the Ministry, will secure Monsieur Husson's promotion to

the post of receiver-general, and the Camusots now recognize him as a relation.

Oscar is a commonplace man, gentle, unpretentious, and modest; faithful—like the Government he serves—to the happy medium in all things. He invites neither envy nor scorn. In short, he is the modern French citizen.

PARIS, *February*, 1842.

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